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AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE MASSEY

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PIEHLER: This is an interview with George Massey and continues an early one that was recorded several years ago on August 1st, 2003. But today's interview is being conducted on April 11th, 2007 in The Center for the Study of War and Society at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

MINTZ: Justin Mintz.

PIEHLER: And thank you again for making time on a sort of visit home, or at least visit to Knoxville.

MASSEY: Glad to do it.

PIEHLER: Let me start off with Justin, who is in the ROTC program. He wanted to ask some questions about some of your earlier ROTC experiences and earlier career.

MASSEY: Okay. Great.

MINTZ: You talk a lot about being a platoon leader. How did you like being a platoon leader?

MASSEY: Well, it was interesting in that that's where you learn everything about leadership. I mean, even though we'd had our leadership courses here at the university. But when you finally get your own unit, and you have to deal with the day-to-day things that troops can get involved in, and that you can get involved in, that's where you learn what it's all about. To give you a little bit of a background, my first platoon sergeant was a Korean War veteran. Sergeant Carl Poole. I remember the first time we met he said, "Lieutenant, let's go to the mess hall and get a cup of coffee." I said, "Well, I don't drink coffee." He looked at me and said, "Sir, you'll never make it in this man's army." So twenty-one years later (Laughter) I retired after a career in the military, so I guess I did okay. But he was a real good, solid NCO [Non-Commissioned Officer] and taught me a lot. I had the good sense, I guess, to listen to my platoon sergeant and my NCOs that I had. I was very fortunate. The unit I came into was being built up and being fully staffed to go to what they call rotoplan, which was a rotation deal that we had going on back in the early 60's between battle groups going into Germany and swapping with a battle group that was coming back to Fort Benning, Georgia. So our units were being fully staffed. Consequently my first platoon was a full rifle platoon down in an infantry company. A lot of times you don't get that, or didn't get that, in some units. But we were fortunate enough to have that. So, as a platoon leader I had all, like I say, all the problems you have and all the successes you have as a platoon leader when you've got good soldiers. Now, we went from the 2nd Infantry Division, which was "straight leg," in other words, we were ground-pounders, to a battle group situation in Germany where we were mechanized infantry. We had the armored personnel carriers. So that added another little wrinkle in, 'cause you had the maintenance and the upkeep of these big four pieces of iron that you had to take care of. So again, as a platoon leader you had your responsibilities increased a little bit. So yeah, it was just a continuation of what I had started in ROTC at the University of Tennessee. And I'll have to say, we had a real good staff here at the University of Tennessee. We had a big program back then. It was mandatory, so we had a brigade of about, golly, I want to say 2,500 cadets. I was fortunate enough, I guess, if you want to call it that, to have been selected to brigade commander my senior year. So I had a lot of folks

down under me, and again, it was a matter of—we had good people in the staff and had good people down the chain. Of course we had good cadre, [like] Captain Wright, who was one of our chief advisors, and Captain Daniel. I don't know if you've met him or not. Jack Daniel. I think he's been over, I'm sure he's probably been over at the ROTC department. He's still around here, I think. ... At that point he had been in Vietnam already by the time he got back here to the department—or had not been in Vietnam, per say, but had been in some good situations. So it was, you know, just a continuation of that training that I had here at UT.

MINTZ: I noticed your picture on the wall over there for brigade commander. What was the branch selection process like back then?

MASSEY: Back then it was pretty—we all got active duty. You know, at that time the military was heck of a lot bigger than it is today. So if you wanted active duty and wanted to go to a particular branch; that was pretty assured that you could do that. I never had really thought about anything other than infantry. I thought that was what I wanted to do, I wanted to be an airborne ranger and all that stuff. So it was just a matter of putting in your paperwork. Now, you had to put down, I think, three choices. But there again, needs of the service always is paramount. But basically if you wanted to go in armor, if you wanted to go in engineering, they were pretty accommodating. I don't remember of course, all the specifics, but I don't know of anyone that didn't get “what they wanted” as their first choice. So the selection process was—And again, the fact that, you know, based on the fact that I was a DMS [Distinguished Military Student] or graduate. I guess the folks over there, the cadres, probably put forward “hey, this guy ought to get his first choice.” Well, that's kind of how that went.

MINTZ: So you get to your first unit. What was your relationship with your commander like there?

MASSEY: First commander I had was a first lieutenant and a very interesting individual, to say the least. Actually, the closest relationship I had at that point was with our executive officer, Lieutenant Randall, who was first lieutenant. It's kind of interesting; this is 1962 and it was the first black officer that I had ever “served with or exposed to,” if that's a correct term. But I had no problems with either one of them. As a matter of fact, Lieutenant Sauvageot was their company commander. He left pretty soon there after, 'cause his tour as company commander ended. So when we went to Germany on the rotoplan situation, we had a captain 'cause they had built the unit up as I had indicated earlier. They brought in a lot of captains to take over these companies going over on this rotoplan. So Captain Kennedy, he had just come out of the infantry career course and he was squared away. He taught me a lot. He would jack you up when you needed to be jacked up. But he would also pat you on the back when things went pretty good. So it was a good relationship. Lieutenant Randall, the executive officer I had, he was real good, real straight individual. So much so that the first day that I reported into the unit, just to give you a little story of how they operated, he looked at me and he said, “Lieutenant, you will conduct PT in the morning.” It was not, “Can you?” or “Do you want to?” It was, “You will conduct physical training in the morning.” So again, harking back to my training here at the university that was one of the things we did a lot of and knew how to do: the Army Daily Dozen. I don't even know if they still have the Army Daily Dozen anymore. So, I fell the company in the next morning, and they didn't know who in the world I was, 'cause a lot of folks

had never seen me. ‘Cause I got in there that afternoon, the next morning here I’m out here in front of the company. We fell in, did the Army Daily Dozen, and I took them on a run. ‘Cause I was in good shape. That was another thing, I hit the ground running. Literally. And immediately—and I think this is one of the things, you know, being prepared and having the background I got here at the university, that first experience, from that day forward, the people knew who I was in the company. They said, “Man, this lieutenant’s something else.” ‘Cause I took them on a pretty good run. I did make one mistake. We went by the headquarters, and I counted cadence, and I said on the left sick call, and that was headquarters up there. They didn’t particularly care for that. There was a company coming back hollering sick call. (Laughs) So it was all fun and games. They thought, “Well this is alright. This lieutenant’s got a little spunk about him.” So that was my initial introduction—but the relationship I had with the commanding officers was always good. I mean, I tried to do what they wanted done, and when I didn’t then I was told about it. (Laughs)

MINTZ: How many years were you with this unit?

MASSEY: Stayed there two years. This was in the early 60’s. We went to Germany, came back, and in the mean time I had gotten into jump school, airborne school, and got sent off to ranger school. I didn’t get to ranger school until I got back from this rotoplan as a lieutenant. At that time our assistant division commander was General Corley. General Corley was kind of an interesting individual. He was a big proponent for the ranger school. One of the things he would do, he would look at all the infantry lieutenants and if you didn’t have a ranger tab you got sent to ranger school. There were no questions asked. Of course when I got back from rotoplan I was on orders right away. Which I wanted to do. That was not a matter of me not wanting to go to ranger school. But I will tell you one little story about General Corley. I digress every now and then, as Dr. Piehler knows.

PIEHLER: No, you have great digressions. No need to apologize. (Laughter)

MASSEY: General Corley, he looked like an eagle. I mean he had, just, a stare that could melt you if you needed to be. He made a comment one night at a dining in, which is the dress blues and tennis shoes that you do every now and then. He got up and he said, “You know, General MacArthur has seven silver stars. I have eight.” I mean that was just kind of the way he phrased it, so much to say, “I’m a warhorse too.” And he was. He was quite decorated, but he was also very good. One of the techniques he used was he would come out and inspect training. You know, as the assistant division commander that was one of the things he did. He was ADC for training, as we called them. We had ADC for supplies or whatever, you know, the other admin. He would come out and inspect you and of course, you kind of knew he was coming and everybody would have everything all together. Well, one of the things he would do is the next day, come right back. And you might not be prepared as well that day. That’s what he tried to do. He wanted to see how things were really on a day-to-day basis being run. He was usually pretty good. If things were really screwed up he would chomp you hard, but otherwise he was pretty good about it. In any event, so after about two years, I was sitting there one day and I get a phone call from the S1, or the G1 [personnel] actually, in the division. I digress a little bit—my older brother, by this time, had come back and he was in the G3 [division operations officer] shop at division. So you had two brothers in the same unit at one time, although he was older

and senior in rank to me, of course. But the G1 had called and says, “We’ve got inquiries. They have done a screening of all first lieutenants who were airborne ranger qualified. They’re looking for lieutenants who would like to go to Special Forces. Would you be interested?” So I thought about it, and I said, “Well, yeah.” That sounded like it might be a lot of fun. You know, I didn’t know that much about Special Forces at that point, ‘cause we’re talking ’64 when things were just starting to build up with Special Forces. So in any event, the next day I called him back and I said, “Yeah.” He said, “Okay, we’ll set you up to go to the 8th Special Forces down in Panama. So we’ll send you to the language school. You need to take the language aptitude test.” I think it was called ALAT [Army Language Aptitude Test] or something. I forget exactly what it was called but it was a little test to see if you had aptitude for language. So I went back, and then that night I said, “Well, you know, the 10th is over in Germany. That might be a nice place to go.” ‘Cause I’d already been over in Germany for six months. So I called him back and I said, “Hey, do you think they would have a slot for the 10th Special Forces in Germany?” He said, “No problem, they’re just filling slots.” You know, the G1, the personnel guys. He said, “We’ll send you to language school once you take the ALAT. You’ll take the Czech language.” So I took the test and I got orders and shipped out for Monterrey, California to the Defense Language Institute of Monterey, California. Little did I know that my aptitude for language, in the Czech language, was a little weak, being very honest. (Laughs) It was a tough forty-seven weeks in the language school. That’s how long it was. Six hours a day, forty-seven weeks. Eventually I did learn the language and pass the course and went off to the 10th Special Forces in Germany. Get into Germany oh, in about—‘course I went in the meantime to the Unconventional Warfare School at Fort Bragg. I forget what they call it now.

MINTZ: I think it’s Special Forces Qualification Course.

MASSEY: Special Forces Qualification Course, now. ‘Cause I eventually came back and ran that for the officers there at Bragg. Kind of an interesting tie-in. But anyhow, went through that course, got into Germany in November, and immediately went off to ski training and stuff like that. Of course, it was the dead of the winter. By the next Spring of ... ’66, the 5th Special Forces was already in Vietnam and had deployed almost en mass. So they had all these requirements to fill slots in the 5th Special Forces. Well the 10th was sitting there fat and happy, ‘cause we were fully staffed at this point. All the A-Teams had COs [commanding officer] and XO’s [executive officer], captains and second lieutenants, or in most cases first lieutenants. So in any event, they just basically moved all of us to Vietnam to replace the guys that went over there in the 5th. So in the summer of ’66 I went to Vietnam with the 5th Special Forces. And of course, did a year tour there and then came back ... to Fort Benning. And was what they call a snow bird for awhile, and kind of waited for the advance course to start.

PIEHLER: How long did you have to wait before the course started?

MASSEY: It was ... I want to say ...

PIEHLER: Was it weeks or months?

MASSEY: It was three or four months. Yeah, we kind of counted, did inventories, and just, as they called us, snow birds. Or black birds, I think, is what they call them. I mean you just kind

of waited for the course to start.

PIEHLER: So you literally waited? I mean, they essentially made busywork for you.

MASSEY: You know, you would get in on some inspections and things like that. Just kind of keep you employed. You couldn't just go off and play golf. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: But I'm also struck because you'd been in combat, and fairly rigorous combat. I mean, you didn't have a desk job in Vietnam. What was it like to go from that, and now you're not even in a course. You're essentially doing busywork.

MASSEY: It was a pretty good break, to be very honest.

PIEHLER: So you didn't mind the ...

MASSEY: No, the busywork didn't bother me. I mean, it was just one of those things. And I was not by myself. You know, I wasn't unique, to put it that way. It was just the way the course time started. So there were a few of us like that. 'Cause they had to get us slotted somewhere, and the advance course was coming along. Once it started we were there for a year. At that point the commanding general at Fort Benning, who was commandant of the infantry school and also commanded Fort Benning, General Wright, who had been in the Second World War and had been captured and had survived the Bataan Death March. I think there's a book written, I think the title of it is *How Hell Forged a General*. He was a young lieutenant in the Second World War at that time over in the Pacific on Manila at that time, and survived the death march. He alluded to that in our opening comments to us. He said, "Gentlemen, every day I am so thankful to be here. It's hard to convey that to you if you haven't been where I've been." I mean, he was a very humble individual. But very astute. You could tell he was a real fine gentleman. And that's the way he treated the courses. He was not a screamer and a shouter and all that kind of stuff. One of the things he did tell us, it was kind of interesting, he put out the percentages. He said, "99.6% of you have been to Vietnam already." We were all combat veterans going to the advanced course. We looked around and said, "Where's that 0.4% that hasn't been yet?" We wanted to see them. (Laughter) I mean, it was kind of a joke, but he said, "99.6% of you have been to Vietnam, and the chances are that you'll all go back to Vietnam after the advance course is over. You're here for nine months. Enjoy your time with your families. Now sure, you're here to study and learn and become a better officer." But he said, "Enjoy the time with your families." They really pounded that all year long. Even the people down under him said the same thing.

PIEHLER: So they really meant it? It wasn't just lip service.

MASSEY: No, it wasn't lip service. They said, "You guys are going back so you might as well enjoy it."

PIEHLER: So it sounds like they really made the training so that you had time with your families.

MASSEY: They did. There were some field problems, but not that much. It was basically a classroom type setup. We were released a lot of afternoons and things like that. Weekends we were pretty free.

PIEHLER: I'm sort of curious because with everyone I interview, whether they're career or draftee or volunteer who served for the duration, training is very vivid. At least basic training, and often initial officer training. But I wonder, what is it like having been in combat? I mean you had been well trained, you gave the impression, before going to Vietnam. What's it like to come back after seeing a lot of combat and go back to a classroom to receive additional training? I mean, what's ...

MASSEY: Well, again, to give you one of the little digressions that I go into. Like I said, 99% of us, we didn't know if those figures were correct. We assumed they were, 'cause everybody had a combat patch on their right shoulder for the most part. Well, you got a bunch of young captains who are full of pee and vinegar anyway. All infantry types, most of us airborne, ranger, and all this. You know, infantry ground-pounders. Well, instructors had a difficult job trying to make it interesting and trying to bring you back into "the real world," if you will. The basic infantry tactics of how you're supposed to deploy your units and do all this stuff. 'Course they were making us junior staff, battalion and brigade level staff. That's what this was all about. But in any event, we had some pretty ... how would I say this? Characters, in our class. And almost immediately, one of the first things that came out—you know, the instructor would be up and he would be making a point to the effect that if you don't apply these principles or if you don't learn this lesson, you know, it may come back to haunt you in combat. Well, you know, you're talking to some combat veterans. Well, our class came up with a little cry. "48, 49, 50, some shit." You know, it was kind of being flippant towards the instructors. Well the instructors went along with it. They had a difficult job. So that was kind of our attitude initially.

PIEHLER: Your instructors, what was their background?

MASSEY: Well most of them were the same. They had already been, and some were even older. Had already been and were majors and for the most part had been around a little ways. So they understood where we were coming from, 'cause a lot of them had already been in combat, came back, took the advanced course, and then stayed there as instructors. So, there again of course, we had other combat arms and other branches in there that had their particular expertise that they were getting across to us. You know, supply, transportation, all this. And a lot of these guys had already been to Vietnam. So again, they knew what our approach was gonna be, I guess. And they tried to make it as palatable as they could to get our attention and keep it.

PIEHLER: One question I have, how useful was it? Particularly when you went back into combat in Vietnam?

MASSEY: Having gone to the advanced course again?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

MASSEY: You know, there again, you don't ever stop learning. That's the key. You try to take those things that they do try to teach you. And of course ... you can probably glean, a lot of times the things you get in the books are not ... (Taps table)

PIEHLER: Yeah, that's what often isn't written down. I've gotten that sense in every profession, particularly in the military.

MASSEY: Oh yeah, you can have the basic principles and the basic background, but on a day-to-day basis you're going to get things like, "My God, they didn't teach us about this," or "we didn't have this brought out to us." 'Cause, as I've said before ... you train, you train, you train, and the first thirty seconds of a firefight is the most chaotic time you'll ever experience. I mean, that was my experience, and I've talked to a lot of guys that have said the same thing. But once that is over with, then your training, your instincts kick in. And you start doing what you ...

PIEHLER: Now was it chaotic even after, even in your seventh or eight or ninth firefight?

MASSEY: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: It doesn't matter how long? Even if you've done this before, it didn't matter.

MASSEY: Yeah. It may become a little easier, but then again it's just chaotic. It's that initial burst of six, as we say. It catches your attention. Of course a lot of times you're kind of prepared for it, 'cause you know contact's imminent, and that kind of stuff. But every now and then, boy when it happens, it comes in a hurry. You just have to ... catch yourself and settle down and try to do the best you can do. And there again, you train your units and those guys down under you, the NCOs, and of course I was never with a "regular infantry unit." It was either Special Forces, and the second time around with the Ranger battalion. So we always had a small select group of Americans and then you were dealing with the little people, as I call them. Now, getting them oriented in the right direction sometimes was like herding cats. (Laughter) You never knew what they were going to do. But yeah, it was a little chaotic. That was the experience.

PIEHLER: You did your first tour very early in the war, well before the American buildup. And you're in this advanced course with fellow officers who had all been in Vietnam. Looking back now, at that time, when you were in the classroom, but also when you were at the officer's club or over at each other's houses for dinner, what did you talk about the war? I mean what was your sense of how the war was going? How did your experiences compare with others?

MASSEY: Well, and again I alluded there a few minutes ago. The fact that I was with, I hate to use the term "elite group", but it was a small, select group of twelve guys on a Special Forces A-Team. A lot of my contemporaries there at Fort Benning in advanced course had been rifle platoon and company commanders with a regular unit. Their experiences were a heck of a lot different. You know, they had a big support system around 'em. They had all these troops out there that they could move. Usually on our operations there would be two, at the most three, Americans. And the rest of them were what we called the little people. Your air support and your artillery support was not quite as responsive or not quite as quick. One of the things that the regular units, of course—they had overwatch, I think that was the term we were using, for the

Special Forces camp. So what would happen a lot of times, if we made the initial contact and stirred up the hornet's nest, then the regular units would come in and take over the operation. Which, you know, that was a good tactic 'cause they could bring a heck of a lot more firepower.

PIEHLER: So, particularly talking to other officers, you got a sense that compared to them you were really on your own. You were not aware of this in Vietnam, but ...

MASSEY: Well we kind of knew that. I mean it was not a blinding flash to us. One of the things though that I came away with, and a lot of my contemporaries who were in Special Forces did, a lot of the main line units were, I would not say jealous, but they were ... less than complimentary of the Special Forces guys. 'Cause they thought we were getting, even though we didn't get that much support, they thought some of the things that we got to do that were a little off the charts, so to speak. They were kind of jealous or envious. But then also there was, and I say this in all honesty, at the higher levels I think there were a lot of people, the general officer level, that did not like what Special Forces was about. They thought we were mavericks; they thought we were a little strange and wild. Especially the, and I don't think I'm getting into anything classified here, everybody knew about it, the SOG, the Special Observation Group, they called them. Surveillance and Observation. But anyway, the SOG guys that were actually going across border and doing a lot of operations over there. But there was, I think, this jealousy at the higher levels. And it's taken a long time for them to finally realize, and today, I think more than ever, the Special Ops guys, the Special Forces, Rangers, Navy Seals, all these folks, are held in a high regard by the folks up the chain. So that was not quite evident in Vietnam.

PIEHLER: It's interesting you say that, 'cause historians have written about that, that there was a lot of resistance to the idea, for example, of the Green Berets. How far did that penetrate? It sounds like you felt that.

MASSEY: Oh yeah. It came down all the way. (Laughter) 'Cause a lot of the contemporaries, guys that are company commanders or platoon leaders, we would discuss that. They didn't really know what we were doing. They built a camp, 'cause they were kind of in an enclave type situation. They would go out and do their operations. We were out on the border. I mean there was a hundred Special Forces camps along the Vietnam-Laos-Cambodian border. You know, my particular camp that I built was, I think, eight or nine kilometers off the border of Cambodia, right off of what they call the Parrot's Peak. Right off the end of it. And that was a big infiltration route. Well we were just like a sieve. You could only catch so much of it. So much of it would get by you. Then our support, like you say, was, we had artillery. We could get air support, but not near as quick and responsive as the mainline units did.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you ... back at Benning are sort of telling these other officers essentially what Special Forces does. They were so ill-informed.

MASSEY: Well it was not a new concept, but really in '62 is when Kennedy came to Bragg and said, "Okay, I kind of like what you guys are about." Gave the Green Beret, set us apart a little bit. I think that was a little bit of the, not the mystique or the feeling, you know, "These guys are wearing their berets around and they think they're God's gift to whatever." Unfortunately, and I will say this also in all honesty, there were some guys who did take that demeanor and became a

little wild and wooly in their relationships with other officers and the military. And that is where the maverick type thing grew up. I always tried to—you know, initially I'm an army officer, I'm infantry, and then I do wear the beret. But I was never ...

PIEHLER: But some Special Forces really did view themselves as a separate ...

MASSEY: They went out a little on the fringes, so to speak. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What is it like to be back with your wife after being away for a year in combat?

MASSEY: Yeah, it was ... You know, I'll have to say this, again. I've always said, it was rougher, I think, on the wives and the families than it was on me. I kind of knew what was going on. Unlike today, and this is not a sour grapes, and I think it's great that they've got the communications capabilities that every night these guys can e-mail their wives or they can call. I got one phone call through my first year in Vietnam on a Hamm operator type situation, where we had to say, "Over." And then she would come on and say something, and of course it's being listened to by everybody in the world if they had their Hamm radios on. But in any event, like I said I felt like it was tougher on them. One of the things I said was, "If you don't here from me, that's good news." I'm not trying to be morbid here, but I said, "If a green car drives up in front of the house, that's the bad news."

PIEHLER: I'm glad you mentioned that sort of difference, because I think in another generation. Students, particularly, when they read this transcript won't have any conception that you were still a mail-driven, that that was still how you communicated.

MASSEY: Well, and I tried to write something when I could nearly every day. But then again, they might not get picked up for a week. So, you know, my wife would get a block—but to get back to your initial question, when I got back home, the kids, my daughter was ... about three. And then the other daughter was born in '65, so she was about one or a little older. So it was kind of, they knew who I was, but then again you had to relearn your family, you know, who you are. I think one of the things, I have a very strong wife. I mean, we've been married almost fifty years now, so ... She became more independent. She had to step up and do a lot of things that I had "done." But she had a strong support. She stayed in our little home town and my dad and mother were there, and her folks were there, so they supported her real closely. But she became more independent, and that is not a bad thing, really.

PIEHLER: But how does it go?

MASSEY: That's a good question, because some folks had some problems from that. 'Cause the wives were saying, "Hell, I can do this." But we worked it out and didn't really have any major problems of it. She was very supportive of my career. You know, if that's what you want to do. I mean it was tough. The second time in was tougher for her than it was for me. She has said in later years, "Had you had to go back a third time I don't know if I could have ..."

PIEHLER: So the third time would have been the breaking point.

MASSEY: Yeah, she said that would have been tough. At that time frame, as we got older, say, if I was a major lieutenant colonel and something was going on hot I think she could have handled it.

PIEHLER: But this break between tours helped your domestic life?

MASSEY: That's one of the things I think we're seeing in today's situation, with these back-to-back tours. Some of these guys now have almost been there three times. And that, even though with all the support and being able to maintain contact, that's gotta be tough. And it's tough on the families. It's tough on the families. I just say it's a good family that can survive a lot of this stuff, even today.

PIEHLER: Well let me make sure I turn it over and see if Justin has any questions.

MINTZ: You talked a minute ago about the operational difference between your Special Operations guys and your conventional forces. What was the difference on the personal level with that, as far as the experience of Vietnam goes?

MASSEY: Well, I guess in looking back on it, they got a better grounding, if you will, in conventional units and how to operate within the operational framework. Things had to go these certain ways. We were basically out there winging it a lot of times, and if you were the man on the ground you were the one calling the shots. Whereas a lot of times the company commander, or the battalion commander, was told, "This is what I want you to do," or "This is where I want you to go." I will remember one day, I don't know who this guy was, got above in one of my operations, and he got on the air-to-ground radio and he was telling me I needed to do so-and-so. I just went back at him and said, "If you want to run this operation you land your chopper and get your ass out here." That's the last I heard of him. (Laughter) That's maybe not the wisest thing to do, but I was out there in the middle of a firefight. I didn't have time to hear some guy up here telling me he wants this and that done. Now the conventional units, like I said, they set up their operations. They knew they had this type of support. They knew the air strikes were going to go in here. Now we tried to, when we were running a major operation, we would lay on those kinds of things. But a lot of times—and what's also interesting, like I alluded to awhile ago, there was about a hundred camps up and down the border, each camp may run a different type of operations based on the terrain, if nothing else. Now we were down in the northern end of what was known as the Plain of Reeds. So a lot of our operations were in waist-deep water. You get up into the central highlands around Pleiku; those guys were beating through the jungles. So just from that viewpoint it was a lot of difference. Then of course with the conventional units, they had the helicopter support. They could pick up and move guys in a hurry if they needed to, if you could get an LZ hacked out. Of course their medevac situation was probably a heck of a lot better than ours. Again, fortunately we didn't have the large number of American casualties, but when we did have casualties we had to submit our requests up through two channels. The Vietnamese channel and the U.S. channel, to the medevac. Now, early on it became very evident that if we were in a firefight or a hot situation, the Vietnamese would not honor the request. You know, they would just deny it. Then that released the American medevac situation. They could come in and pick them up. Now the little people that had been injured or wounded, they liked

that option a whole lot better because they knew that they would get picked up, taken back either to Cu Chi, which was an American hospital with the 25th Infantry Division, or they would go back to Bein Hoa where our Special Forces hospital was. If they were picked up by the Vietnamese medevac, they would go into Cholon, which was next to Saigon, and if they had, and this is just saying it like it, if they had any kind of extremity wound, wound to the arm, wound to the leg, it was almost an immediate amputation because they did not try to take care of the wound. They would just do the easiest thing. And it is. It's easier to take care of an amputation than it is a serious wound to the lower leg or something like that. So that attitude, or that atmosphere, was there, and we knew it, and our counterparts knew it.

PIEHLER: I just want to clarify, so in other words, if they were evacuated to a Vietnamese hospital, they knew they were going to lose a limb?

MASSEY: If they had a very serious extremity ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, but in an American hospital ...

MASSEY: They would try to save it.

PIEHLER: They would try to save it. So it sounds like they knew this very quickly.

MASSEY: They knew that very quickly. And our counterparts knew it. I mean it was—and there again that was a major difference. Because the Americans, they knew they were going to get medevaced to a good solid American hospital. And I'll have to say this, we took a lot of our folks into Cu Chi, the 25th Infantry Division, 'cause that was our overwatch outfit. And they took tremendous care. Again, it was not, "Hey, these are Vietnamese Special Forces guys." They gave them as good or better. And as soon as they got them stabilized ... then we would transfer them to our hospital back in Bein Hoa. And that happened in all the Corps areas. That was just down in our Three Corps areas. I don't know if that answered your question or not. I get rambling and forget the basic question that you ask, I think. The difference between the conventional and the SF, it was just a matter of degrees, I guess, as far as what support they had and what we had on a real hands-on basis.

MINTZ: What role did the draft play in the difference between conventional—'cause I know Special Forces are all-volunteer.

MASSEY: Yeah.

MINTZ: As far as, you know, what the average Joe in a conventional unit is going to experience versus what a guy in a Special Forces unit is going to experience on a personal level. Because, you know, the guy in the conventional unit doesn't want to be there.

MASSEY: Yeah, and that was in some cases a problem. That was one of the things that would be a big difference between what a company commander, or a platoon leader, in a conventional unit and a Special Forces A-Team commander would run into. 'Cause you had guys who, number one, volunteered to be there. And they were a little more experienced, you know, at that

point. And I guess still today, you have to have been on active duty ... two years, three years, [and] be a spec four before you ever get to volunteer to go to Special Forces. Whereas in a regular unit, you know, the guys came in, they went to basic AIT and boom, they were in a regular unit. Not as experienced, and as you indicated, maybe they didn't want to be there. That would create, I'm sure, some leadership problems that we did not really experience. Now, the second time around—and I'm kind of jumping ahead here a little bit to talk to you about leadership problems that you would experience, this ranger battalion I had was located next to a 105 or 155 artillery battery [shell]. Had a young captain there and he had this artillery group there. They had a drug problem, and at this point I was a major and he would come over and we would discuss how do you correct or how do you fight this drug problem. One of the things we did, and we kind of got our heads together, and like I said we were not running as many operations then 'cause the war was starting to draw down and we didn't have all the assets and our mission was to kind of hold the line, so to speak. So we devised a plan to start using the 155 battery every night in what we called the "mad minute". We would come up with intel or we would just say, "Okay, we think we need to shoot at this area." And this gave these kids, this artillery battery something to do, and really something to look forward to. 'Cause they said, "Every night, man, we're going to blow up the countryside." Ee would try to give them feedback as to what we thought was going on. And one of the programs we had in Vietnam at this time was called Chieu Hoi. Which basically was, a guy would come in and say, "I chieu hoi." In other words, "I give up." This was the VC, or the locals that would give up and come in. And the Chieu Hoi rate went straight up in our little area, 'cause we shot at them every night. They finally said, "Man, this is crazy. I'm sitting here and I'm getting shot at nearly every night." More particularly, if we had good intel we were hitting their base camps. So we would get that information back to this battery saying, "Hey, our chieu hoi rate went up. You guys are doing a good job." And that ...

PIEHLER: You started this as a way to deal with the drug problem.

MASSEY: One of the ways to deal with the drug problem. Then also you gotta secure your camp, so to speak, from getting the drugs into the camp. 'Cause the people, you know, on the outside—and this was up in the area that was the Montagnard, which is the mountain people up in the central highlands. And you know they would still get the drugs in there to them. They would get them in there somehow. I don't want to overplay that it was a big problem, but it was a problem that this young captain had. Of course one of the other ways is to police the troop up and send him out of there, if he was a bad actor so to speak. Or just wouldn't come around. But that was one of the things we did that kind of helped counteract the drug problem. So there was those kind of differences that you had being on the conventional unit as opposed to Special Forces and/or the Ranger battalion. We had four Americans out here with a Vietnamese Ranger battalion, so again we didn't, and these were ... there was a captain and two senior NCOs and myself. At that time, I was a major by this time. So again, you were dealing with more experienced guys. That would be the biggest difference. The draftee, a lot of them became good soldiers, and a lot of them became career soldiers. I think I mentioned earlier on, I can't sit here and tell you that the military's the career for you. But if you get in it and like it, it can be a good career. And that's what happened to a lot of young men. They got in there and they said, "Hey, this is not all bad." One of the things that I still maintain is that every able-bodied young man, two years of service to his country. Not necessarily military, but if it's in the military I think

he's going to benefit from it. Peace Corps, Habitat for Humanity, I don't know. I mean there's a lot of different ways we can cut that down, but I think some kind of service to the country really makes people grow up and appreciate, if you will, what this country's all about. That's just a personal feeling of mine. Doesn't have anything to do with this, probably, but in any event.

MINTZ: Were there any real differences in the way that you dealt with the Vietcong versus the NVA?

MASSEY: Well, for the most part we ran into Vietcong. Now, we did not hit any of the mainline units. There were probably some advisors, but basically we ran into the Vietcong in our situation. Now the mainline units, or the conventional units, they did hit some of the NVA units that came in. But it seemed like, for the most part, we hit the local types or the Vietcong types. And you know, you just ... the main thing you did was try to close with and kill the enemy, I guess, is the old infantry byword. (Laughs) But no, we never did hit any mainline NVA units that I was aware of.

PIEHLER: I'm gonna flip this.

-----END OF TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE-----

PIEHLER: I want to make sure we sort of stay in roughly chronological order. After you finished your Benning course, do you remember what roughly month or year that was?

MASSEY: Oh, golly.

PIEHLER: I know it's been awhile. You got back from Vietnam in '67. Did you finish it in '68?

MASSEY: Yeah, and as it ended up I got to stay at Benning as kind of a unique, and it was the only unit that the army had at that time was a scout dog detachment. I got assigned there as a scout dog commander. Had four hundred and fifty German Shepherds, and then we trained the scout dog handlers for Vietnam. And it ended up, at one time, there were twenty-six scout dog platoons in Vietnam that supported the mainline units. Now a scout dog, unlike a sentry dog, as the name implies, scouted out in front of the units and did a worthwhile job, and did a hell of a job over there, and saved a lot of lives. I was in charge of the unit that trained these scout dogs, and also the handlers. And I was there for about, not quite a year, I guess. But anyway, it was an interesting tour. Had AWOL dogs. You know, they would break loose every now and then. And we had the local area around Fort Benning, this was at Fort Benning, and people would say, "Hey I got one of your dogs down here." 'Cause they had a tattoo on their left ear, you know, their number. And the local people knew. They were not vicious. I mean, they were German Shepherds, and they would get after you, but they were not trained to be attack dogs. So consequently, a lot of the locals knew that, and they would call us and we would go down and police them up and bring them back.

PIEHLER: Well, you have some humorous stories about that.

MASSEY: Yeah, you'd say, "Well okay, I've got an AWOL dog. So let's go see where we can ..." And we put that word out to the locals in that area around Fort Benning. 'Cause the dogs wouldn't go that far, but still though we had to make sure they understood that hey, if a German Shepherd shows up on your doorstep he's probably one of ours. And we had good support from the locals. But anyhow, I stayed there at Benning and did that for a while. Then, prior to going to Vietnam the second time, I was sent to the Vietnamese language school at the Defense Language Institute at Monterey. Again, it was forty-seven weeks, six hours a day of learning how to speak Vietnamese. That became probably one of the best things, you know, when you can speak the language that just makes it so much easier. Now of course I was not like a native, but I was pretty fluent. The counterpart I had with the ranger battalions, they would speak English. One in particular, Thieu Ta [Major] Bao, who was Major Bao from the Vietnamese army, he wanted to improve his English. So he would speak English, and I would speak Vietnamese, and we would correct each other as we needed to. But we basically could converse without any problems. And that made it a whole lot better when you could walk into a unit and talk to the private out here, if you will, in Vietnamese. And boy, you would see their eyes just light up. "Oh, this big American, you know, he can speak my language." That made a very positive influence. A very positive effect.

PIEHLER: You mentioned earlier that you had suffered through Czech. (Laughter) But how was Vietnamese?

MASSEY: Vietnamese is totally different. The Czech language is very structured. You had to know English to be able to do Czech, because it had the genders and the, you know, all the parts of speech and everything else. The Vietnamese language, the problem I had with it was the fact that it was tonal. Very high pitched. So I had to kick my voice way up. With my voice it was just, you know, you'll never sound like a Vietnamese. Well no, unless you throw it up about four or five octaves, you know. And so I had to do that. It was not structured. Fortunately, a French, Catholic priest, Alexander de Rhodes, had Latinized the Vietnamese language. So you didn't have the little curly Qs and figures, if you will. You had, you know, regular letters. And so that way it made it a whole lot easier to learn the language. But again, it was very tonal. And a lot of their words, like a lot of our words, "there, their, they're," you know they sound the same but they mean totally different [things]. Well the Vietnamese had a very [big] difference in a lot of their words, so you had to listen to that real closely.

PIEHLER: I'm curious about the language institute being in Monterey. What was it like to live in Monterey?

MASSEY: Well, the first time, as a lieutenant, we were out there in the mid 60's there. I guess '64 to '65. I forget exactly. I guess that's when I was there at the language school. We had a little apartment. At that time just had the one daughter. And we lived right next to the Presidio. I mean I walked through a gate, literally, right there at my class. But it was—yeah, the rent district out there was a little bit more than ...

PIEHLER: So you lived off base both times?

MASSEY: Well the second time then I was able to get on Fort Ord. Lived on Fort Ord, and that made it a whole lot less expensive, if you will.

PIEHLER: Okay.

MASSEY: Now looking back on it, and this is one of those things, you know, what if, at that point Carmel Valley out from Carmel, I don't know if you know the area ...

PIEHLER: I know it's a high rent area.

MASSEY: Yeah, well at that point back in the mid 60's Carmel Valley had not started to develop yet. Had I had the foresight to go up there and buy two or three acres of land that would have been my annuity for retirement because it just boomed in the later years. But I do remember looking, and we weren't interested in buying at all out there, 'cause like I said we were living on post. But we looked at some housing and it was expensive back then. And of course it's just gone crazy.

PIEHLER: Now I think they still have the language institute there. I think, could you have picked a more expensive piece of real estate?

MASSEY: Well of course they, now I don't know what they do, the fact that they don't have Fort Ord anymore. Fort Ord closed. So I don't know where the folk live now. They did have on-post housing for the troops. You know, they could live in barracks. But I'm not sure what they do with the "officers or folks who have a family and have to rent off-post." I don't know, probably expensive.

PIEHLER: How did your children and your wife; was there a difference, sort of moving around the country?

MASSEY: Oh, I think our kids benefited from it. I mean they don't meet a stranger, and they say themselves that it was a good experience. You know; a lot of different people. Our oldest daughter, for instance, went to three different high schools. And none of them think that that was a bad thing.

PIEHLER: 'Cause some families, it's a disaster.

MASSEY: Oh, it is.

PIEHLER: I also think, in some ways you don't take any place that seriously 'cause this one place is cliquish.

MASSEY: We had good experiences everywhere we went, tried to see as much as we could in the areas. My wife and I have discussed this on many occasions. You know, we grew up down in middle Tennessee, a little place called Fayetteville. But in any event, we say, had we stayed there, we're not sure if we would have stayed together or not. That's being a little facetious there, but it broadened both of our horizons. And I mean, we've lived in places and saw things

that we never would have had we stayed right there in middle Tennessee. So, and for the kids, I think it was a tremendous experience. And most military families, I think, across the board will say the same thing. You know, we got to go to Germany, they got to see a lot over there, they got to ski train, and the schools, the Department of Defense school system in Germany was great. Good teachers, and they had good programs for them. A lot of enrichment-type things. Now, we went out to Cheney, Washington, which is about as backwater as you can get. Although, it's near Spokane. But it was a university town. There again, the kids met a totally different type of kids, if you will. These kids had all gone to school together, all the way from grade school all the way up to high school. So when our daughters moved in there in high school, they ran into a group that had been together for essentially ten or twelve years. But they meshed right in. I mean, they were able to just go right in. Plus, and I'll say this, when we were at Fort Bragg and our daughters started at the high school there, the on-post kids were bussed downtown. And just say it like it is, they were used to integrate the high school downtown. It was a predominantly black high school. Again, I think this was a tremendous experience for our girls because they got to see a different culture, I guess you would say, than what we had in Europe when they first started high school.

PIEHLER: Is this right after Vietnam that you went to Fort Bragg?

MASSEY: Yeah, I came back the second time and, well actually, after the second tour I went to Vanderbilt and got my grad degree, and then went to Command General Staff College, then went to Europe, and then coming back the last tour out of Europe to Fort Bragg.

PIEHLER: And that's when they were bussed. So it was in the late 70's.

MASSEY: Yeah, '79. Well, we came back in '79, so we were there two years. So yeah, they were bussed in off the post into E.E. Smith High School downtown.

PIEHLER: I mean, what was the reaction of you and the other parents essentially being used to integrate?

MASSEY: Well I use that term, and that wasn't really so, "Oh yeah, we're using these kids." But in actuality, when you looked at it, you had predominantly white kids off-post were going downtown. And of course, they didn't have a high school at Fort Bragg for the military kids.

PIEHLER: Okay.

MASSEY: Now like, Fort Cambell up here, I think they had their own high school on-post. Didn't have that at Bragg. And a lot of the kids either went to E.E. Smith, or Sandford, I think, was another high school that some of the kids went to. And maybe I've used that term that they were "used to integrate the high school." But it was predominantly white kids. Now there were some black kids on post, but predominantly white kids. They were put into the predominantly black high school. I think the ratio was about 70/30.

PIEHLER: Your first senior officer was a black officer. That, you know, in the 60's and the 70's the army is very different from the rest of society in terms of race.

MASSEY: Well, yeah. Of course I grew up in the South, and I went to segregated schools. Never went to an integrated school at all until I got to the university, and then of course there weren't that many here, actually. So going on active duty, and I remember my wife, especially, 'cause when we got to Benning and you go into the units. I didn't really say anything about it, I just said, well yeah, you know, I've got this fire-eater lieutenant for an XO. I mean he was a little (unintelligible) about that tall, boy he could bring pete. Well his wife called my wife. And back then the military was more into afternoon teas, the ladies got together, more than it is today, for sure. But in any event, his wife called my wife and said, "Yeah I'll pick you up. We were going to the officer's club, and we had the ladies group get together." And my wife had no idea that she was black until she picked her up.

PIEHLER: So this black woman showed up, and it sounds like your wife was stunned.

MASSEY: Well she said, "Yeah, it was a little different." But hey, we were all in the military. And it was nothing, it was not a big deal for us. Plus, and I have to say, I guess, even though I grew up in a segregated society. I grew up on a farm and we had tenant farmers. I had been around blacks. So, it was not a brand new thing to me. But the hierarchy, you know, it was there. I mean, I was called Mr. George by these older guys who were our tenant farmers. I never, very honestly, felt like they were my "inferiors." I'll put it that way.

PIEHLER: So after Monterrey, what happened next? Was it back to Vietnam?

MASSEY: Yeah, after the Vietnamese class, back to Vietnam with the Ranger battalion.

PIEHLER: I know Justin has a number of questions in this area, so I'm gonna make sure I don't dominate.

MINTZ: About how long before you actually went back to Vietnam did you find out you were going back?

MASSEY: Well, when I went to the language school, the Vietnamese language school, I knew hey, the next tour's in Vietnam. I mean that was a given. So, I knew the whole year I was there in the language school as soon as it was over, and you took your thirty to forty-five day leave then you were on your way back to Vietnam. Now at that point, I didn't know exactly—I knew the first time I was going to be in Special Forces. I mean that was not an unknown. The second time in, I thought I was going to go into a program called the MATT program. Military Assistant Training Teams or something, I think. M-A-T-T. But when I got on ground, they said, "Hey, we need some guys in the Ranger command and what we're looking for are people like [you] who have been in Special Forces and who have worked with the Vietnamese before." They said, "We're needing to build up the Vietnamese Ranger program." And what they were doing was they were converting the Special Forces camps into Ranger battalions. So I got pulled off and put into that situation. Which, as it ended up—and this is a little digression, when I got off the plane in Pleiku going to the MR2, which is Military Ranger Command 2, the guy that met me was a UT graduate. Tommy M. Johnson. He was two years ahead of me. So I knew him, and he knew me. He knew of me, not as much as I knew him, 'cause he was a brigade

commander. You look on the wall over there, there's two straight Tommy Johnsons who were brigade commanders, and this was the first one, Tommy M. He met me at the plane and said, "Yeah, you're gonna go out to one of our camps out here." So I got in the Ranger Command at that point. Basically, like I said, we were converting the Special Forces camps into Ranger battalions. Just changed the color of the beret and had fewer people, fewer Americans. (Laughter) Had the same soldiers, so to speak. Our support system was a little less, at that point too, because things were kind of drawing down. This was in '70-71, I guess, when that came about. So, and I went out into the camps, and I basically became, for the want of a better term, a troubleshooter. When they had a problem in a camp they would police me up and send me in. 'Cause I had dealt with these—a lot of these guy had not really dealt with the Vietnamese like I had. The fact that I spoke the language, that was the key. 'Cause I could go in, I didn't have to worry. 'Cause interpreters, number one, they're not as trained in the English language as you would want them to be. So you didn't know what they were actually saying. (Laughter) It might as they say, things would get lost in the translation. So being able to go in and just tell the interpreter, "Hey, I appreciate you being here, but I can talk with my counterpart without your help." And again, you right away had a rapport, whether or not they liked you per say or not. You could tell immediately if they knew what they were talking about or if they knew what they were doing, and you could get things going.

PIEHLER: So it sounds like that language institute was money well spent.

MASSEY: Oh, it was, totally.

PIEHLER: In many ways that would have been a great advantage, it sounds, the first tour.

MASSEY: Oh yeah. Oh, tremendous. 'Cause there were times that I knew that I was not getting straight answers. And not maybe out of being devious, but just out of not ...

PIEHLER: Literally the communications.

MASSEY: Literally the communications. One of the things I've always said about a Vietnamese, you will never get a yes or no answer. (Laughter) They will not give you—and sometimes I would say, "Yes or no?" And they would keep talking. "No, yes or no!" They just would not give you a yes or no, 'cause they'd always want to kind of put a little caveat in there somehow. It was interesting. But being able to speak the language was a big plus that second time around.

MINTZ: Did you have any anxiety about going back?

MASSEY: Oh the second time?

MINTZ: Yes.

MASSEY: Not really. Here again, you had to look at it, or I did, as you know, I'm a "professional." And, I mean, I'm not going to say that there's, when you say anxiety, yeah, I kind of knew what I was getting into. Now when I got on the ground I thought I was going to go

into this training teams type situation, and a little, not apprehensive, but a little unknown there. Okay, how's this all going to work? But when they said, "No, we're going to slot you over here to the Ranger battalions, and you're going to go into an SF camp and change it over." Well right away I had a better feeling and a little more understanding of how these things operate. Plus, again, going back to the fact that I spoke the language. That made a big difference when I went into my first camp. Plus I had a tremendous counterpart, this Thieu Ta Bao that I referenced awhile ago. He was a professional and was really good. He ran his camp. All I did was kind of stand back and give him what advice I could when he needed it, if he needed any, plus try to get support for him. One of the things that we were able to do was shake the supply chain a little bit and get him better uniforms and a little more weapons and things like that. Better ammunition for him. That's where we kind of facilitated really. I mean as far as running the camp, or running the operations, he knew what he was doing. There was not much I could give him. Conversely, as I indicated earlier, we had some other camps that were having problems, and they would police me up and I ended up being kind of a troubleshooter. I went into one or two camps that was just dismal, unbelievable conditions. Being able to walk in and tell the major who was running that camp, "Here's what we're going to do, and here's how we're going to do it," and be able to tell him that in Vietnamese, right away I had his attention. We cleaned up a lot of the camps, you know. For instance, claymore mines in one camp I went into, Duc Lap, oh, unbelievable. (Laughs) The claymore mines were set up beautiful. They were oriented toward the enemy. But I took the clicker. This guy didn't even know how to check to see if they were under power, and I took the little thing and didn't get a signal. We started chasing the lines down, and a lot of them were cut. You know, there was no way this thing was going to go off. So we had to replace all the claymores. Then we'd go into the mortar pit, and we'd find all the charges were wet. I mean, the things wouldn't have ever fired. Unfortunately, and I have to say this, the SF, the Special Forces guys had kind of let this thing—and I wrote a big scathing memo, if you will, about what I found in this particular camp that somebody for a period of time had really not done their job. And it was the Americans.

PIEHLER: The Americans, really?

MASSEY: Had not done their job, yeah. So that was one of the things we ran into there in the central highlands. And that was not in every camp, but there were a lot of things that—you know, they had a supply room full of uniforms and these guys were walking around out here, you know, barefoot. We had these, what we called bata boots. They were little tennis shoes with rubber soles. I said, "Why haven't these been issued to these troops?" [They said], "Well we want to keep them." I said, "No, no, no. We issue these." We got it organized and had a big issue—and of course here again the troops out here had thought Santa Claus had come. It was just a matter of organizing the supply room and getting the stuff issued out. And for whatever reason they just hadn't done that. So those were the kind of things that I ran into in the camps that were not really wired together right. Then we started operations 'cause they had kind of backed off running good operations. Again, we got the mortars set up and got some artillery support, and things like that for them. So you know, it just became that kind of thing the second time around.

MINTZ: It sounds like the second time, when you were with the Ranger that the Vietnamese were running it a little more than with the Special Forces.

MASSEY: Yeah, and that was the overall “plan,” if you will, that eventually we’re gonna be out of here. And we came out in ’73, I guess, I think that’s when we pulled out, finally, and this was in ’71. So yeah, we were trying to let them fight their own battle, so to speak.

MINTZ: So you were just there to, if they made a mistake, to correct them.

MASSEY: Facilitate. Correct and facilitate. And that’s what I’m saying, with my first counterpart I had in the ranger command, as far as giving him advice on how to run things, he was straight, he was good. Some of the other camps were less than that. That’s when you had to kind of say, “This is what we’re gonna do,” and try to train them a little better. And if nothing else, just get them organized. That’s why I hearken back to it, and I hate to say this, ‘cause these are guys from my “background,” Special Forces guys, had kind of—and that’s where I think some of the, that we had alluded to earlier on, some of the feelings from higher up that the SF guys had not really done a tremendous job later on in the war. Now earlier on I think they had.

PIEHLER: Well this was one of the things that, particularly the Kennedy brothers, this was the big thing about Special Forces. They were supposed to work with “native populations,” and you felt that part of the mission had really deteriorated.

MASSEY: It had deteriorated, yeah. Of course, at this point there were a lot of support had been pulled back, and so maybe the guys just figured, “Hey, we’re not going to win this thing.” And I basically told my guys, “On our little part of the pie, we’re not going to win this thing by ourselves. But we’re going to try to prepare these folks so that eventually they can hold on and win.” Well, as we saw in ’75, it didn’t happen.

PIEHLER: I’m curious, because in the general sense, I mean going back in the second time—I mean the war has become very controversial by ’70, ’71. And we’re also in peace talks. Going back now in a second tour in a very different war, it sounds like.

MASSEY: Very different situation, and like I kind of alluded to, I’m a professional so I tried to go do my job the best I could, but I felt, I guess deep down, had I wanted to admit it that hey, we’re not winning this thing. It’s a political war at this point, and you will never win a political war, I don’t think.

PIEHLER: So you really had that sense in ’71?

MASSEY: Yeah, I had that sense. I’m of the opinion [that] you go balls out, you annihilate. We should have been going north, blowing up everything we could. Well, we weren’t going to do that. Not to jump ahead, but I think we should have done more of that in the situation we’ve got right now. We’ve just, the rest of the world, and this may be getting way out and way off from topic here, but I think the rest of the world in general understands brute force. We’ve got it, but we’re sometimes not of the nature to use it. Now we did in World War II. I mean we used our brute force there big time. Since then I don’t think we have, and that’s just my view of history. It may be a very simplistic view of it, but in some cases I think you have to let the other

people know we're willing to, as Teddy [Roosevelt] said, "Walk light and carry a big stick." But be willing to use it. And sometimes we didn't do that.

PIEHLER: You've alluded to, without using the term, the Vietnamization of the war. What did you think at the time? Did you think it could work? I mean it seems like it worked in your area, but what was your larger sense?

MASSEY: My larger sense, and I'll say this and you can say, "Oh no, this guy is blowing smoke at us." When I came back after my second tour, I had an uncle who was a really strong Democrat. I mean he had been a Democrat all his life and had died as a Democrat. But he asked me point blank, "What's your opinion?" This was when I got back in '73 when we finally pulled the plug and closed the doors. I had a brother—my older brother was one of the last guys out, as they say, he turned out the lights. I remember telling my uncle, I said, "You know, Charles, in two years I think the North Vietnamese will take over." 1975 that happened. Because I just had a sense that they had a little more drive, if you will. Nationalism, whatever you want to call it, than the South Vietnamese had. I'm sitting here thinking, well this guy thinks he's a big prophet. But I do remember point blank telling my uncle that, and I remember, two years later, him coming to me and saying, "Buddy, you called it right on." I said, "Well, there was just that feeling that the North had more drive than the South Vietnamese did." And that's just the way it broke out.

PIEHLER: In Special Forces did you ever get rotated back for R&R even in-country, say to Saigon or ...

MASSEY: Well yeah, we had R&R. I was able on both tours to get to Hawaii and meet my wife and kids. And one time my mother came with her ... But yeah, we were able to—now you had other R&R sites. Some people went to Australia; some went to Bangkok [or] Thailand. Of course Hawaii was a big one. Also in the second tour, not only did we get a week of R&R back in Hawaii, I was able to take a two week leave and actually come back to the states. And got back home for a two week leave. Now that was tough going back, more so on my wife than it was me. I said, "Well you can see the light at the end of the tunnel. I just hope it's not a damn train." (Laughter) 'Cause I had about three months left at that point. But yeah, that was tough coming back after that two week leave, 'cause boy you got home and said, "Man this is a hell of a lot better than where I am right now." (Laughter) You know, you just had to suck up and go.

PIEHLER: How often would you get to a place like Saigon, even as part of your duties?

MASSEY: Literally, when I came to R&R the first time, I got on a chopper and flew to Saigon and got on a plane and flew to Hawaii. The second time around, of course we were near Pleiku with the Ranger battalion, so I was able to get back to Pleiku every now and then for meetings, stuff like that. But basically, coming to Saigon, there was a place down south called Vung Tau, which was kind of an R&R spot for the in-country R&R. Never got to Vung Tau. Da Nang over on the coast. So literally you would, like you say, fly in. As a matter of fact, when I came back on that leave I got on the plane in my uniform, jungles, if you will. I had my class A with me, so when we landed in L.A., I got off the plane and changed into a class A uniform to fly the rest of

the way home. 'Cause the plane left Saigon and stopped maybe in Guam to refuel, but we came straight into L.A.

PIEHLER: I remember interviewing this one Air Force officer, and he said, "You know, we decided to live off-base, and we rented an apartment, and we even hired a cook. In many ways [for] Special Forces it strikes me is you're always in the field. For the most part.

MASSEY: Yeah, for the most part. Now I will say this, they did have what they called a safe house in Saigon that some guys got back to if they were going out of country or if they got back into Saigon for whatever reason. Then we had our base up at Nha Trang, the overall headquarters for Special Forces. And it was secure, and they had a lot of things there. But for the most part, the guys out in the camps ...

PIEHLER: That was it.

MASSEY: Yeah, that was it. Now your B-Teams sometimes might have a nice little place you could get back into, but for the most part I tried to send the guys off back to the B-Team for a day or two—Now, here again you asked the question and I kind of danced around it. We did send our guys back to Saigon. I personally did not get back there. Now we did send some guys. 'Cause it was good, and we'd tell them, "Go blow it out because when you come back here it's back to business." You know. Now we had beer out in the camp, but I just said we're not going to have a bunch of wild parties out here. Now some of the camps did. I can't deny that for all. But not with my bunch, not on my watch.

PIEHLER: You mentioned the drug problem in the neighboring unit, the artillery unit. What was your larger sense about the impact of the war on the army by '70, '71, '72 both in Vietnam and when you got back?

MASSEY: I think it had a very deleterious effect on it. 'Cause we saw this happening, and then when I came back I indicated after the advanced course I stayed there as a scout dog commander. I had some of the NCOs who had been scout dog handlers, if you will, in Vietnam, they came [back] and made E5 [sergeant]. They didn't want to be NCOs, 'cause they had never been in garrison. A lot of them had never been in a garrison situation where they had to make sure their squad took care of this or the troops cleaned up the billets and all that. We saw that when I finally got into Germany then after the Command General Staff College. We had a good cadre of senior NCOs, we had some young NCOs, but that middle NCO area, E6 [staff sergeant], E7 [sergeant first class], there was a real problem in that area of good NCOs. A lot of them had just not developed because they had been in the Vietnam situation, and they just did not have the garrison mentality of how to run a unit on a regular military post. 'Cause they'd been in combat, or been out in the woods. That was a problem. Then you had some of the carryover from some of the drug situations. Those that they hadn't weeded out yet

PIEHLER: Often the term is attached to the army in the 70's, particularly by '74, '75, the sort of "hollow army". How accurate is that term, because at times I ...

MASSEY: Well that's interesting. By this time I was in grad school and Command General Staff College. Of course, by the time I got to Germany in '76, again, we did have some holes in the army as far as having good NCO leadership. Now the officer corps was still in pretty good shape, but your middle NCO area I think is where we had a real problem. I had good senior NCOs, good company first sergeants. We had a lot of good young E5s who probably didn't have combat experience, but they had good training. So that middle group, the E6, E7, E8 [master sergeant, first sergeant], sometimes was ...

PIEHLER: That's a very interesting observation. This point was made after World War II, how difficult it was for troops that had gone through the war to adjust to garrison ...

MASSEY: Oh yeah, garrison duty's tough for a lot of these folks. And more particularly in the Germany situation, in that you're in a foreign culture. A lot of these guys ... they just didn't adjust well into that. Some of them were having family problems at this point as well; even though Vietnam had ended awhile [ago] they were still having some problems along those lines. So yeah ... the mid 70's was a tough time in the Army for a lot of units. Sure was.

MINTZ: I want to go back to the movies about the war. I know the movie The Green Berets got mentioned, but it never got discussed in the last interview. What did you think about that movie?

MASSEY: Well it was a John Wayne movie, what can I say? (Laughter) You know, the good guys always win. You know, it was an entertaining movie, but it was a little over-the-top, and I can't say it any other way. To digress a little bit, one of the things they did at Fort Benning, that's where it was filmed, and we could recognize a lot of the scenes. And my wife in particular, to this day she will tell this every chance she gets, she was going into the officer's club one day and John Wayne happened to be going in there for lunch or whatever. And she said, "I just volunteered to him, my husband is a Green Beret." He very graciously said, "I'll open the door for any Green Beret's wife." (Laughter) And that's been her big thing with John Wayne ever since, she says, "Oh yeah I got to talk to John Wayne direct." But to get back to your original questioning, it was a little overdone. I think it was trying to paint a positive picture.

MINTZ: To counteract all the anti-war stuff?

MASSEY: Yeah, I think so. But as I started to allude to, one of the things they built there at Benning was the Vietnamese camp, I don't remember if you remember the scenes where they were going through and searching the camp and everything. Well they left all that at Fort Benning. Just left it in place. Well I then used it during the scout dog training for my scout dog handlers. That's where we learned to search villages.

PIEHLER: So this movie set ...

MASSEY: The movie set became part of our training facility, if you will. And we used it, 'cause it was good. They the holes and the spider holes, so we'd put people in there and let the dogs learn how to scent and find this kind of thing.

PIEHLER: The set itself was fairly accurate? Hollywood movies are Hollywood movies, but it wasn't completely off? It was useful?

MASSEY: Yeah, and it looked a whole lot like the, and it was based on the, if I remember correctly from the movie, it was with the Montagnard, the mountain people. They built the pole houses, built them up off the ground. Thatched roofs and everything. So it was pretty authentic as far as the way it actually looked. And like I said, we were able to use it as part of our training with the scout dogs.

PIEHLER: Since we're on the subject of movies, is there any movie that comes close to your experiences or your war?

MASSEY: The only thing I've ever said that was the, some of the scenes—Platoon, I think was totally way off base. But some of the scenes in Platoon of the firefights, the initial chaotic situation that I alluded to awhile ago, that captured about as close as anything. But other than that, all the other movies, they're Hollywood. What can I say?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

MASSEY: I think it was ... Full Metal Jacket?

PIEHLER: Full Metal Jacket, yeah.

MASSEY: Of course that was more about the Marines, and I couldn't comment on that one other than the fact that it was a little Hollywoody, I guess. But no, any other movies, I don't remember ... That was the only thing I would say, that in Platoon, some of the firefight scenes, those were pretty authentic.

PIEHLER: I'm curious because Special Forces in the 1960's was in many ways not well known. You mentioned it was well known amongst much of the military. But now it has such a mystique. I mean it is really ...

MASSEY: Well through the years they finally organized it, number one, after the fiasco we had there in the desert trying to rescue the hostages. And General Stiner, who is actually from up here in East Tennessee, and I don't know if you've been able to lasso him to get him to sit down, he's not a Tennessee graduate, he was a Tennessee Tech graduate, I believe, but he's a four star general. I'm sure he could really give you some insight into some things. And he was in part of that operation, and he said at that point, "We have got to get a unified command if we're gonna run Special Ops. You can't just let the Navy do theirs, the Air Force do theirs, the Army do theirs, and you know. We've got to bring it under one unified command. They've done that through the years. Of course, now we have got SOCOM, which is Special Operation Command, still down at McDill Air Force Base. I think that's where it's located. And part of it over at Bragg. So through the years it's evolved. A guy that I worked for in Vietnam, General Joe Lutz, he was a major at that time, he was one of the instrumental driving forces behind getting things organized. Unfortunately he passed away a few years ago, but you'll see his name in some of the movers to get it put together in one little unified command. Plus, I think they finally have

realized, and they're realizing it more and more in this war on terror, that the Special Ops, and I'm not just talking about Green Berets, but the Special Ops in general can do a lot of things. They're doing things today that you and I don't even know about. They've had the training and the background and the support to get it done.

PIEHLER: But in the popular consciousness, there are now scores of—I mean, based on no sense of reality, but how do you sort of view that?

MASSEY: Yeah, a lot of people, and of course the mystique that you talk about, and I don't, how can I say this? I don't go around and say, "Oh yeah, I was a Green Beret." You know, that's not my nature. But if someone asks, "Now, what were you?" I'll say, "I was in Special Forces." And they'll ask the question, "Was that the Green Berets?" And I say yeah, and they get that kind of wild-eyed look at you like, "Oh my God." (Laughter) And I tell them, I say, "Guys, I'm not a wild-eyed killer. I was in there and I did my job." You know, there is that little mystique out there. But today's Special Ops guys are so much better trained than we were, I think. Of course, better equipped. And they're doing things all around the world. We used to call them the mobile training teams, MTTs, out there, and I'm sure they're doing it today in places we don't even know about.

PIEHLER: I wanted to sort of go back into chronological order. After your second tour of Vietnam, what happened next?

MASSEY: Came back to—and while I was in Vietnam that second tour I applied for what they called the ADPRID. Advanced Degree [Program for ROTC Instructor Duty], I forget what the acronym stands for, but basically you apply for an advanced degree and then you would stay at that school and be an ROTC instructor. Well in my infinite wisdom I applied for Tennessee, Georgia, or Alabama, 'cause I wanted to see good southeastern conference football. (Laughter) You know, that was my ulterior motive in the back of my head. Of course I wanted to come back to UT. Well there was no slots, and they came back and said, "We have a slot in Vanderbilt." And my initial reaction, I'm being very honest here, there's no way I can qualify to get into Vanderbilt. And of course they said, "Well you've got to take the graduate exam" and all this. I did, and as it came about they did send me to Vanderbilt for a graduate degree. And I think that's where I told you I met Dr. Leffler.

PIEHLER: Yes, Mel Leffler, yes.

MASSEY: And of course I went there to study history, or get my degree in history. I was a history major here at the university. And then stayed with the ROTC department and taught military history there for two years. Then left there and went to Command General Staff College. So I taught there for two years. Very interesting. Of course I did my graduate degree, and they did require me to take twelve extra hours, I believe, of history to kind of bring me up to snuff. They had some real good instructors over there. Not instructors, professors. Military term. Had a Dr. Boorman, I don't know if you remember him, a Dr. Grantham.

PIEHLER: Grantham, his name is well known.

MASSEY: Yeah, I enjoyed his classes. We got along. Of course Dr. Leffler, I enjoyed his classes. He jerked me pretty hard on a paper I turned into him, I'll never forget. "Wrote it in the passive voice." (Laughter) Which, you know ...

PIEHLER: I'm very familiar. (Laughter)

MASSEY: Oh yeah, you probably know it. But it was enjoyable. So in any event, stayed there for the two years and taught military history. Well we opened it up to the student body in general, not only ROTC students. It ended up I had more non-military students than I had ROTC students in the class. I did try to jazz it up and do some wild and wooly things, and I brought in outside guys. A guy who had been a Revolutionary War, and he was a doctor, and he was there on the staff, Dr. Leach.

PIEHLER: Oh yes ... he's well known. He's passed away.

MASSEY: Oh is that right?

PIEHLER: Yeah.

MASSEY: But he would come in, and I mean, he would put on some just tremendous—and we had another guy who would for the Civil War era. He would come in and literally take the students out there in Nashville. There was a lot of battles and stuff fought there, and he knew the ins and outs. So he tried to jazz it up a little bit. I did some crazy things, too, in my class. I'd ring bells and—this is one of the things I did, I'd wave my orange and white shaker. (Laughter) They all knew I was a UT graduate. Of course the students, I could go into all kinds of stuff that they did things to me, you know. It was always in good fun and everything. We had a lot of fun. One of the things I did do in the class, instead of—prior to that ... for the most part they'd given multiple-choice, kind of very blasé exams. Well I said "no, we're gonna write term papers, and we're gonna have essay exams." I would give them a situation like, "You're a reporter for the Washington Post and you're following Lee into such and so battle. Give me what happened in this battle." You know, lay it out. What were the reasons they lost or won or whatever. That was the type of question I would give if it were for the Civil War. The other situations would be the same thing. It caused them to think a little bit and also to have to write. One of the things I found, and this is kind of interesting, I may have alluded to this before to you, Dr. Piehler, of course, Vanderbilt students [are] erudite, well-founded, but a lot of them could not write that great, I didn't think. I was not a great writer myself, as Dr. Leffler pointed out to me, (Laughter) but spelling and just those kinds of things. I would red-line it and say, "Hey, you're getting docked if you don't check your spelling. There's a dictionary I'm sure that you can lay your hands on. I don't care if you use it in class." So I kind of put a little more jaundiced eye on them when I was grading the term papers and ... essay exams. I'd red-line them a little bit for that kind of stuff, but I was surprised, you think of the Vanderbilt students as really top-notch.

-----END OF TAPE FOUR, SIDE TWO-----

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with George Massey on April 11th, 2007 at the Center for the Study of War and Society at the University of Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

MINTZ: Justin Mintz.

PIEHLER: You were saying ... you were a bit surprised that a lot of the Vanderbilt students didn't write very well.

MASSEY: Yeah, and that was, but at the same time, I'm sure that's kind of carried over from all different areas.

PIEHLER: Well I know we talked a little bit—actually we jumped around in that interview, and we talked a little about Vanderbilt, but it's sort of worth reflecting again, you're sort of back on a college campus in the middle, the tail end of the Vietnam War. What were your reflections on that?

MASSEY: Well when I first got to campus, of course, I was going to be there “as a student.” I went into the ROTC department—you know, they said you need to check in with them so they know you are on campus, all this kind of stuff. At that point, the prior PMS [Professor of Military Science] had decreed to the cadre that they would not wear uniforms. Well the new PMS came in, Colonel MacIntire, who I eventually worked for as the PMS, and he was a West Point graduate and he said, “We're going into the uniform. We're military, we're army, we're on this campus, and we're going to wear the uniform.” Now as a student there were a lot of—Vanderbilt at that point had a lot of students who were in the, and I forget, there was a particular branch of ...

PIEHLER: Peabody.

MASSEY: Well yeah, they had Peabody. But I'm talking about—they had military students there who were in the studies that were eventually going to be instructors at West Point. They were getting their advanced degree there at Vanderbilt. I can't remember the name of the program.

PIEHLER: Yeah, that program still exists, actually. I know exactly which program you're ...

MASSEY: Oh does it? Okay. So he said, “I'm not going to require you guys to wear uniforms, but all the present cadre are going to wear uniforms at every chance—if there is a situation where we need to have you come in or participate, you're going to be in uniform.” And I totally agreed with that. I said, “Hey, I'm proud of this uniform, and I'll wear it anywhere I need to.” One of the things we also did after I completed my degree and got into the ROTC department, and Dr. Boorman, who was my advisor on my thesis, he was a Far East specialist. Asia and Japan, that area. And the fact that I had been in Vietnam, he kind of helped me choose my subject. And I wrote about Vo Nguyen Giap. You know, the Vietnamese general. But in any event, one of the things he kind of recommended ... was that the ROTC department needs to become proactive and get out on campus and let people know what you're doing. 'Cause at this point—I don't know if you're a scholarship student or not, but at Vanderbilt ... the Army ROTC scholarship program was the only way that program survived in the early 70's. I mean had we not had those students we would have been pretty meager. Of course you know, it's a good school, it's worth a lot to

get the ROTC scholarship, but one of the things we found out is that a lot of professors had no idea what this scholarship program involved or what it amounted to. So we literally, the ROTC cadre divided up and we took twenty professors, called them and says, “Hey, we’d like to come and have an in-office sit-down with you and just explain the ROTC program.” Ninety-nine percent were very receptive. I mean you had that one or two percent that, “Eh, I’m not real sure I want to hear this stuff.” But in any event, they would sit and listen to it. Once you got into it and really described what the ROTC program was, what the ROTC scholarship program was, what we were about and what we were trying to do, it became ... a public relations thing if nothing else. Now the Navy ROTC was always strong, generally, I guess, from past times, it had always been a strong program there, and Army had always been looked down upon. Well, not looked down upon, but it had not had that same support from the administration. But we also, fortunately, a Navy captain retired and he became, he was in the admissions office there at Vanderbilt. Of course he knew the scholarship programs, and he really started pumping that hard to all applicants. Recruiting students, if you will, for Vanderbilt. And he played up both the Army and the Navy ROTC scholarship program.

PIEHLER: Before you joined the ROTC cadre there and worked for them, while you were still just a graduate student, and you’re in civilian clothes—it sounds like your professors knew you were a Vietnam veteran.

MASSEY: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: But how about your fellow students? And how often did that come up?

MASSEY: Uh, well, ‘course right away, you know, I’m older. Right away, they’re wondering who this guy is. And just in the course of the conversation they would say, “What are you getting your degree in?” I would explain the program to them. I here getting an advanced degree because I’m going to be an instructor or teach over at the ROTC department in military history.” And immediately, “Are you kidding me? They have those kind of programs?” I’d say, “Oh yeah. And all the universities around have ROTC programs.” You know, like at the University of Tennessee, that I wanted to go to. But I didn’t tell them that. (Laughs) And most of the students were just totally dumbfounded that the military would have those kinds of programs. I think that they were very receptive to it, or thought that, “Well that’s was pretty good.” You know, they were positive about it.

PIEHLER: Well the reason I ask, partly, is my student, I think you might remember meeting Mark Bolton.

MASSEY: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: You know, he actually went to some school campuses to look at the school newspaper. He went to Wisconsin and looked through the school newspaper. In the 70’s there were all these Vietnam veterans going, and he can’t find anything in the school newspaper.

MASSEY: Oh is that right?

PIEHLER: I mean he can't find, they're there. I mean, they're there in numbers that were sort of surprising. You know, several hundred are going at a time. Yet compared to, say, WWII where it's made clear when these veterans are going through. So I ask partly because it seems like it's in some ways a silent group that goes through.

MASSEY: Well like I say, with the program they had there for the West Point ... instructors up there, there were a pretty good contingent of students there. But my courses were all primarily political science or history. I took some political science courses, but also mainly history courses. You know, most of the students were very, I didn't feel any bad feelings from them, I guess you would say. They figured this guy, being a little more mature, and you know, I was very dedicated to sitting on the front row and all these kinds of things. Number one, I couldn't hear all that great, so I figured I better be up front. (Laughter) You know, try to do all the things that you're supposed to do. So yeah, I had good rapport, I think, with the students. And once they found out I wasn't a wild-eyed monger ...

PIEHLER: Is there any question they asked you that you remember? What were they curious about? I mean, one, they were surprised that the army was sending you to graduate school. But did anyone ever ask you about Vietnam?

MASSEY: Well we would discuss it some, and they would want to know some of the things. And again, I didn't get into some real war story type things. I never was into that kind of situation. But I tried to tell them what we were doing. You know, I was with the Special Forces, and we were out working with the people, and they seemed to be genuinely interested in what we were about because a lot of them had never had any kind of connection with the military for the most part. Of course some of them would say, "Oh yeah, my dad was in Korea," or something like that. But as far as a particular gut-wrenching question, I don't know ...

PIEHLER: Well to give you a question, every now and then when I go to high schools I tell high school teachers how you need to brief their students. You know, make sure your students don't start out the first question, "Did you kill anyone?" You know, there's a range of questions. You might ask that as the hundredth question, but you would never ask someone as a first question.

MASSEY: As a matter of fact I was going to allude to that same thing. I've got a little slide program that I talk about the culture of Vietnam. I show how they dress and how they live and some of the things they grow, and nothing has to do with the military. It's just about the Vietnamese culture. Well, invariably there will be that question. You know, little Johnny, ten years old, he'll say, "Did you ever kill anybody?" And like you say, the teachers will just go, "Oh, my God." And I just try to answer those. "You know, war is very difficult and sometimes people do get killed." Most of the times the little kids will go, "Okay." You know, they've seen enough war movies and stuff like that to know that happens. But yeah, that's an interesting comment. Yeah, you'll get that question. And it's out of a sincere ...

PIEHLER: No, I think some of the people asking don't have a consciousness of that's not the type of question to start off a conversation.

MASSEY: But the college students, we never had that problem.

PIEHLER: You didn't have that.

MASSEY: No, not really.

PIEHLER: On your thesis, you knew Vietnamese. Did you use Vietnamese sources?

MASSEY: Uh, no there were not really that many available, I guess you would say. Or maybe I didn't range far enough away to get into some of that, if there were any Vietnamese tomes anywhere that I could have used. I pretty well stuck to the basic stuff. And Dr. Boorman, he was ... I'll not say lenient with me, but he gave me some pretty good latitude as to what I could end up using, I guess you'd say. I tried where I could, if there were some first source type stuff I tried to use them, but for the most part it was just kind of a compilation of a chronological training of Giap and how he was influenced with Ho Chi Minh and all that. And of course, the war had not ended at this point when I finished it. I think I can remember back, I said, "The jury is still out. Is he going to be the winner or is he going to be the loser of this whole thing?" The National People's War, as they called it, is that going to be the winning side? And it ended up, I guess, it was in total.

PIEHLER: After Vanderbilt where did you go to next?

MASSEY: Command General Staff College.

PIEHLER: Okay, and so ...

MASSEY: Called the best year of our lives. And it was, it was a good year. You had about twelve hundred contemporaries. We were all different walks of the military and we had all different branches there. Army, Navy, Air Force, had foreign students of course. My tablemate—they broke us down into work groups and then into sections. Each work group had about fifteen, and then you had about four work groups, so you had a section of about sixty officers. They planned this. They didn't put all infantry guys or all artillery guys together. They had an artillery guy, an infantry guy, transportation. You know, they tried to break it out, because you were trained to be general staff, so you would have to work with all these different branches, if you will. And they would infuse some of the foreign officers. Well my tablemate was from Tunisia. Azmi Mahjoub. He had been here in the states as a lieutenant, I guess, in the advanced course, so he was coming back for his second ... Eventually, and unfortunately, I lost contact with him, and I'm not sure how far up in the Tunisian Army he probably ended up, but I'm sure he probably ...

PIEHLER: He was on the track.

MASSEY: Yeah, he was on the track. But he spoke good English. His wife, unfortunately, she spoke no English at all. Of course, with me being his tablemate, and my wife, to kind of help her out, plus, she was pregnant while we were there in the course. My wife would actually take her for the doctor's appointments and things like that. She said, "You know I would try to speak, and she would just nod her head and grin." And ... we had workgroup parties. We included them,

and she would come and she tried to socialize as best she could, but she had no English at all. You know, she was starting to pick up some of the basic phrases. But he spoke good English, so we got by real well.

PIEHLER: Well, you know ... everything I've heard about that part of Kansas is that you're sort of in the middle of nowhere.

MASSEY: Well one of the things they say is don't pick any hitchhikers up there.

PIEHLER: (Laughs) Yeah, I remember you mentioning that.

MASSEY: They've got the federal pen, the two state pens, and the disciplinary barracks. You know, the Army's pen, if you will. So they say don't pick up any hitchhikers. But it's north of Kansas City by twenty or thirty miles or something, so you could get into Kansas City fairly easily. But yeah, it's kind set off out there by itself. It was a very relaxed year. I mean, it was pretty concentrated as far as your studies go, but they had a lot of stuff going on. A lot of activities. The fact that we were all senior officers, to a degree, majors and lieutenant colonels and some colonels. Some few captains who were on the promotion list to major. So it was that level of families.

PIEHLER: Well it's one of the big stepping stones.

MASSEY: Oh, it is.

PIEHLER: At that point in time, where did you think your career might go? Did you think you might make, you obviously made it to colonel, but in the past did you have any inkling that you might have a chance to make one star?

MASSEY: You know, you have to make your own personal assessment of that. At that point you're there with your contemporaries and [you say], "Well, I'm as good as some of these guys are." But one of the things, and I say this again, and it happens in the military, it happens in any situation—you play the politics. Well I didn't. And I mean, I'm just saying it like it is. I mean sure, I had some guys I probably could have tied my coattail to, but I just never really cultivated those kinds of relationships. Maybe I should have, looking back on it. But at the same time, I felt like full colonel was probably a real good possibility. Maybe general. But once I got into Germany—and I'll also make this comment, and I don't think I'm overstating this to a degree, I think at that point the fact that I had a Special Forces background was not a good thing.

PIEHLER: You think that might have hindered the promotion to the full ...

MASSEY: Now a lot of my contemporaries, they did have some SF background that moved on. Of course they were good guys anyway. I'm just looking at it from my perspective. I said, "Well, you know, maybe that could have been a problem." 'Cause I had some red lines in my OERs [Officer Evaluation Report], as they say. Had some lack of tact and these kinds of things, and that all goes into it. When you get to a certain point, they start looking for what they call

discerners to say, “Well, does this guy go or whatever.” I got selected for a standby for battalion command, and never really did get battalion command. And that’s a big stepping point.

PIEHLER: That’s when you had a sense that ...

MASSEY: Well also at this same point I reached twenty-one years on active duty, and I made a very conscious decision family-wise that we were going to settle down and put the kids through college. At this point they were saying, “Yeah, we’re going to send you to the Department of Army in Washington, D.C. to enhance your career.” I said, “I’ve never been there, don’t want to go there,” and I saluted and got out. And that’s a conscious decision on my part. Now, you can look back on it and say what if. What if I had gone there? I probably would have made at least full colonel, and possibly could have stepped on. But, being realistic about it I wasn’t walking on water. So I just made a conscious decision and got out.

PIEHLER: Lieutenant colonel is quite the achievement. But I just wondered, in terms of what I know about the military, getting a command at general staff, that’s a real marker.

MASSEY: Yeah, and of course a lot of the guys that I went to Command General Staff College with retired as lieutenant colonels. Not all of them moved on, not all of them made general. Some who did, of course. Some of my contemporaries went right on up. And again, I don’t want to get into the specifics of it, when you look at some of the guys who really moved on up, you say, “Okay, he was this, he had this kind of mentor.” I mean, you can trace, you can see. And I never played that game. I never had that situation. I don’t know that any of the guys that I alluded to earlier on—the one guy I probably could have tied into and maybe made more of it was General Lutz, who I’d worked for in Vietnam and who, when I came back to Fort Bragg and ran the Special Forces Officer Qualification Course and the O&I [Operation and Intelligence course] for NCOs, he was the commandant there. You know, I worked for him, he was very professional, I was very professional, but I never did really ... use that position of our familiarity to say “hey, can you ...”

PIEHLER: Can you give me that extra push?

MASSEY: Yeah, I never asked him for that. And I’m sure had I, he would have probably done it. But I think it had to have come from me. He was not going to say, “Okay, I’m going to pull you up, send you off.” This type of thing.

PIEHLER: So after Command and General Staff, did you go to Germany?

MASSEY: Went to Germany as a battalion XO in a mechanized infantry battalion. And that was an interesting tour, to say the least.

PIEHLER: Not only had the army changed, but Germany had changed. What was the difference between Germany in the mid-70’s versus Germany back in the early 60’s?

MASSEY: Well in the early 60’s, the German people for the most part were still very—I didn’t feel any animosity. The older Germans especially. And the same thing held true in the 70’s. We

lived out on German economy for awhile until we could get quarters on post. We lived with the “Burgomeister,” the mayor of this little village, Holzhausen. Couldn’t have been treated better. I mean, they adopted our kids, generally. Oswald and Marina Markert. Very fine couple. Farming community.

PIEHLER: Which part of Germany were you in?

MASSEY: This was in Schweinfurt, up close to the border with the 3rd Infantry Division up near Würzburg up in that area. But like I said, they treated us really great. The younger Germans, at this point, you could get a sense that they were not real keen on having the Americans there. More particularly, when you went downtown, a lot of the bars and discos were not real keen on having the Americans in there. Unfortunately a lot of it was because of the way the Americans acted. So we had to do what we called a CRAC, I believe. Community Relations Activities Committee, or something like that. We had to really get proactive and try to make sure the German businessmen understood that hey, we’ll try to control these young guys if we can. And if they have concerns, make sure that you come to us with your concerns and we’ll try to correct it and work together on this. But the younger folks seemed to be a little less glad that we were there than the older Germans.

PIEHLER: My first trip to Germany was in ’78 when you were, I mean ...

MASSEY: Oh yeah, right there in the middle.

PIEHLER: One of the things that I get a sense is, and I don’t know when the mark wasn’t very good because of the German markets, in the early 60’s ... the dollar ...

MASSEY: Four to one.

PIEHLER: Yeah, four to one.

MASSEY: Four to one. [Four Marks to one Dollar]

PIEHLER: In ’78 I just remember it wasn’t that good. It was declining. I mean it was ...

MASSEY: Well, there was a double-edged sword there. I mean, my wife and I have talked about this. When we first went into Germany, the Mark was four to one. Four Marks to the dollar. The prices, you could go out and eat on the German economy in a guest house for little or nothing. I mean you could eat a tremendous deal for maybe ... ten [Marks]. I don’t know, maybe ... two dollars and fifty cents. So, you know, that was good. You could buy stuff. And the ladies would go off on these shopping trips, and I mean they would come back with all the crystal and you know ... But the one thing my wife, some girls came by and said, “We’re going up to the Hummel factory.” Where they actually do the Hummels. Those little [collectable] dolls. Well I think she had twenty Marks, which was basically five dollars. And I think they brought back four hummels for her. You know, for a little to nothing. And those things today—I mean she started collecting them at that point, and they’re worth ... a heck of a lot more than they cost back in the 60’s. Now, when we got back there in the 70’s, it was two to one or maybe one

point something to one, and the German prices had gone up correspondingly. So the good deals were not as good as they were back in the early 60's. So that has been a big change. 'Course I don't know what it, I mean we left there in '79, I guess, so I'm sure it's totally changed now even more. But yeah, you could travel around. As a matter of fact I was talking to a German couple about a week ago down at Myrtle Beach. They were here visiting, and I said, "You sound like you have a German accent," and he said, "Oh yeah." I said, "Well I'm retired military, and I was stationed in Germany two or three times. One of the places was Bad Tölz." And this guy was raised in Bad Tölz. (Laughter) Small world, as you say. But it was interesting talking to them, and they said, "Well, when have you been back?" And I said '79, and they said, "Oh yeah, things have really changed since then." But it was interesting talking to them about how some of the things have changed. Of course the military is really condensed down now. You know, a lot of kasernes have closed.

PIEHLER: Well I mean it's sort of striking, because I heard rumors as a tourist visiting family—in '78 you could just feel the American presence.

MASSEY: Right, oh yeah. We were everywhere.

PIEHLER: You know, the second time I was there in '88, I was in Karlsruhe, not only could you feel the American presence but the French presence. And now I think that you'd really have to search it out now.

MASSEY: Yeah, the green tags—the American cars, you know, we had the green tags, they're not quite as noticeable. I guess they're still issuing green tags to American cars. 'Cause I do remember, even earlier on back in the 70's they said, "That's a security thing," because they know exactly you're American because of your green license plate. But I don't know if they've changed that. Maybe they have since.

PIEHLER: This was also a period of a lot of terrorism in Germany.

MASSEY: Yeah, it had started. And that was one of the things they were alluding to, was the fact—And to give you another little digression, the high school there in Heidelberg, when I left Schweinfurt and we were down in Heidelberg at the USAEUR [United States Army Europe] headquarters, they were getting these bomb threats called into the high school. And of course they had to react to it. Well they finally determined, "You know, we think these threats are coming from some of the students." So, whoever thought this idea was very ingenious. The threat came in, the call came in, they shut the doors and they said, "Okay, who's not here today?" And they started going down and the compiled this list. Ended up there were about five or six students who were playing hooky, and they would call these bomb threats in. Well the way they handled it was that those kids and their parents were sent home. I mean they flat policed them up and sent them out of Germany. Of course the sponsor, the daddy, he received a reprimand and it went in his record. 'Cause your dependents are your charge, if you will, while you're in Germany. So they stopped that by doing that technique. That stopped the bomb threats at that point. And that was the reason, because the terrorist thing was starting to build up even as early as '78, '79.

PIEHLER: I remember landing in Germany, I couldn't believe airport security in Munich.

MASSEY: Mm hmm, yeah.

PIEHLER: I mean, they had so many armed police and soldiers. And armored personnel carriers on the tarmacs.

MASSEY: Yeah, it was starting at that point, yeah.

PIEHLER: At first you were anticipating a potential Soviet attack. How strong is that fear, relative say 60's versus 70's?

MASSEY: Well the 60's I was down at a little different level, if you will. And when they called in an alert, man, we'd all jump in our APCs [armored personnel carriers] and we'd go out to the LDA's, local deployment areas. You know, we'd sit there and wait and go through all the things you're supposed to go through. Check and make sure you got everything, count all your ammunition. I mean, we had live ammunition, the whole bit. Well, the second time of course I was Special Forces, and that was a little different drill there. You know, we'd get an alert and say, "Oh yeah, we're gonna be dropped over somewhere." But it was all part of that. Third time around, being at a higher level, you'd say, "Well yeah, there's a threat out there, but are they really gonna come across the Fulda Gap?" As we used to call it. But we would have our alerts. When I was down in battalion, we'd go out to our LDA and deploy and set up and sit out there. And sometimes we'd go ahead and run a two or three day operation just to exercise the command and control and the tactical operation center and all this stuff. But then, when I got up to USAEUR headquarters and I was in the G3 shop, the operational area, I got privy to go over and get briefings every day from the G2 [intelligence]. At that point we had the satellites really starting to be used more and more. At that point I said, "There is no way that they can mass and come across the border without us knowing." I mean, 'cause these satellites could spot the license plate on a car.

PIEHLER: Yeah, you're not going to be able to hide a million troops, no matter how good you are.

MASSEY: No matter how good you are. Every time they moved out of the kaserne we knew exactly where they were headed and the general direction they were taking. Of course they were doing the same thing to us. Not that we were ever going to attack. But for them to be able to mass enough to come across, as we say, through the Fulda Gap, it just wasn't going to happen. Now, could they fire something way back? Now sure, that could happen. But as far as an attack across the border ... Of course, we'd play the little games. You know, we'd fly along the border with our choppers, and they would have their stuff up. Every now and then we'd have a chopper get a little inside of the zone and there'd be a diplomatic call, and you know, they'd go through those gyrations. But as far as ... So when I came away from Germany that last time, in my own mind I said, "It's not going to be a ground attack." 'Cause we were arraigned there, and they knew it.

PIEHLER: Well, I just remember in the 80's, you'd often get this—there's one book I even remember reading in college about the next World War. You'd wake up one day and the Soviets had come over the border.

MASSEY: No, that just couldn't happen. I didn't think.

PIEHLER: Yeah, what's really striking, I remember going in '88 to Budapest and I saw a bunch of Soviet troops sort of just walking around the town. And it was sort of shocking, because I still had this image that was often portrayed as these Soviets as these really powerful troops.

MASSEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And I looked at these guys and said, "This is what we're worried about?" I mean I really had this visceral ... I mean it was sort of funny that I had that reaction, but I said, "These are the guys that could ..."

MASSEY: That could come across.

PIEHLER: Yeah, and I was like, "I don't think so."

MASSEY: No. And as you well know, at that point we knew the Soviet economy was really struggling. And they just didn't have the real staying power that they could have really pushed across and done anything. Of course, we could have smacked them pretty hard.

PIEHLER: I also partly ask because your earlier training, you mentioned at junior level you just take this literally and you're new at this, but also ... the Berlin Wall had just gone up.

MASSEY: Yeah, '62 or '61. I was there the first time in '63. So short period. So yeah, you didn't know. And the other side of it is, that last tour there we were able to go into West Berlin and took the kids in. Of course, you had to travel by train at night, and they went through this gyration. You had to turn your ID's in because they didn't want any of you escaping into East Germany. And it was kind of a funny game. Of course the kids thought it was a great adventure. You had to travel at night, and you got into Potsdam in the morning, and you waited until they would let your train go on in after they had checked to make sure everybody was on the train and hadn't jumped off during the night. But what was funny, of course, they had the big wire fences on each side of the railroad, and they had guards about every hundred, hundred and fifty yards or so. Well when we stopped there, the kids got in the window of the train, and there was a guard right directly across from us. They were waving, and you know, going on. Of course he was very stoic, wouldn't make any idea that they were there. But when the train started to move out he kind of waved his hand like that. (Laughter) And you just sit there and think, "You know, that guy understands what's going on as much as we understood what was going on." And the kids still remember that. They say, "Oh yeah, the guard waved at us." (Laughter) But he didn't do it big, he just waved his hand down low. But yeah, that was a good trip for the kids. When you get into West Berlin, and then you drive across, at that point we still had Check Point Charlie to go through. You get into East Berlin and you see, I mean it was still bombed out from World War

II. Of course, I had seen that in '63. Same thing. It had improved some, but it was still pretty meager over in East Berlin even in the 70's.

PIEHLER: Well yeah, I remember in '88, I mean there were, not many, but there were one of two buildings [in Budapest] that were still in ruins. And I mean it was in a high rent district, so it was even more ... You know, you could clearly tell that there were still some scars. After Germany, what happened next?

MASSEY: Came back to Fort Bragg. Supposedly to be an instructor in the Foreign Area Officer Program, which was at that point was part of the Special Forces program in that you would become an area specialist for either Czechoslovakia or wherever in the part of the world you were going to be assigned to. I was going to be an instructor in that particular institute. I forget what they called it; I guess it was the Foreign Area Officer Institute there at Fort Bragg. So I walk in, sign in, do the whole bit. And the guy that I was replacing was a guy that I had served with in Special Forces, and I had known him forever, Dallas Cox. He had continuity files and we kind of swapped notes and everything. We were gonna go on leave back to middle Tennessee and come back, get set up, and by this time he would be leaving and we'd have another little overlap. So I go on leave, come back into Fort Bragg, and they said, "Colonel Massey, you need to report down to Colonel Maladowitz's office." I didn't know him from Adam. While I was gone they decided, hey, we need this guy over in the Special Forces school. I was not a happy camper. Was not a happy troop at all. 'Cause I'd had my mind set that I was gonna go teach here and be a tweedy professor. (Laughs) You know, no reflection. I just thought, "Oh this will be interesting." And next thing I know they said, "No, you're gonna go over to the Special Forces school and run the Officer Qualification Course and the O&I course for the senior NCOs. And you're gonna work for Colonel Ola Mize." And I kind of grin when I say that. Colonel Mize was a unique individual. Metal of honor winner out of Korea. Good old country boy from Alabama. And rough as a cob. So I walk into his office, and he's sitting back. Little bitty guy, real wiry, you know. Full of pee and vinegar. "Colonel Massey, we looked at your record, and we decided that you ought to be over here in the school," and he starts blowing smoke up my butt. And I was standing in front of him—of course he's full colonel and I'm lieutenant colonel, and I said, "Sir, I'm gonna tell you right up front, this is not where I was assigned and this is not what I want to be doing here." He looked at me and said, "Well, by God you're straightforward, aren't you?" I said, "Yes sir, I don't beat around a damn bush. Now I'll do the job if this is what you folks say I ought to do." At this time the commandant was a different general, he wasn't General Lutz. Of course I didn't know that he was coming to be the commandant. But anyhow, long story short Colonel Mize said, "Well, we need you here," and I said, "Okay, great. Where's my office? I will get to work here." So I became the officer for the—they called it the resistance division. And ran the Officer Qualification Course and the O&I course for senior NCOs. Had a real good warrant officer that ran the O&I course, so I just turned it over to him. I said, "Mr. Peach, you know what you're doing here. Continue on, and I'll just check on you. If you need help let me know." (Laughter) The Officer Course was a different question. It had been a little rough around the edges, so we started tightening up some of the requirements. They were letting guys go through that weren't really good swimmers, and this kind of stuff. And I said, "No, we're gonna tighten it up." They need to be basically qualified before they get to the course. 'Cause what a lot of guys were doing was they were volunteering to Special Forces thinking this was great, and they weren't physically ready for it. Some of their backgrounds weren't really ...

So we really started screening them and fingering them out before they got there. One of the first things we did when they came in there ...

PIEHLER: And this was '88?

MASSEY: This was '79. I had just got back. We would put them out on an orienteering basis. Really, it was a compass course. They had to go out by themselves. We gave them a compass and said, "Here's the point that you need to end up on twenty-four hours from now." We'd send them out late in the evening, and away they went through the woods. (Laughter) And it was a test just to see how well they ... 'Cause there was a little stress there, you know. A lot of them didn't know the area and didn't know what they were getting into. We found a lot of them the next morning about three hundred yards in. That's as far as they had gotten. And of course they were immediately kicked out of the program. Then we put them through the swimming program, and they had to go through that thing. If there was a weak swimmer, sorry guys, you're not here. Then we went back to the unit and said, "Don't send us these guys that are not physically able to come here and do this thing." Then we started trying to tighten it up a little bit. So, I was there for two years. General Lutz came in right after that, and we got along real well, and he was very supportive in some of the things we were doing. Didn't have a real strong instructor group at that point, and we started trying to recruit people in that could be good instructors.

PIEHLER: When you say they weren't good instructors ...

MASSEY: Well, I mean they just weren't good on the platform.

PIEHLER: So the problem was they just didn't know how to teach.

MASSEY: Yeah. Of course that was our problem as much as theirs. I mean, we had to run them through some murder boards and things like that. I mean, they had to get up and make their presentations to us, and if they didn't cut it, hey, you've gotta go back and tune this up a little bit. So it was just a matter of tightening it up. We had some good young captains that came in. And like I said, you improve the instructors, and you also improve the students that they're getting, and it started turning around a little bit. But it was a good tour. Stayed there two years and then went off to ROTC duty the second time. And went to a Professor of Military Science assignment out in Cheney, Washington. Eastern Washington University. And that's where I ended up my career. And at that point, like I said, my daughters were starting college. And that's when they contacted me and said, "Oh yeah, we're gonna send you back to the Department of Army to enhance your career." And I just said, "Thank you very much."

PIEHLER: What's been your favorite place for you to live in the United States? 'Cause you were at some very different areas.

MASSEY: We enjoyed Monterey. The two years there in the language school. 'Cause there was a lot to see and do in California. You could run up to San Francisco, run into Yosemite, or go down—'Cause we had a pretty long break at Christmas, and we had some time off. Got down to

L.A. But it was one of those things ... we enjoyed being assigned there, but I would never want to live in California full time. But it was an enjoyable area to be.

PIEHLER: I've warmed to California. I've only been there three times, and I had thought the last time, "I wouldn't mind living here for a year, but I wouldn't want to stay."

MASSEY: It would be tough. And more particularly, L.A. When we got down there and you've got six lanes of traffic like a NASCAR race. And this was ... way back there.

PIEHLER: No, I know. I mean, now ... I once went for an interview, and I remember I was on Eastern time so I was getting up super early, but I remember I drove down ... maybe two hours by car. And there was no traffic early in the morning, but I came back and there was all this traffic. And it was a Saturday, and I said, "Oh, the traffic's horrible," and they said, "Oh, that's nothing. You should see what it's like on Monday." And I couldn't believe it.

MASSEY: That was one of the things we liked about Monterrey. It was still pretty laid back at that point in the 60's. It was not real hustle bustle. And we didn't have very far to go, you know.

PIEHLER: You decided to return to Tennessee.

MASSEY: Came back to Tennessee. And went into the stockbroker business with Dean Witter there in Nashville. And found out pretty soon that that was not my calling, really. It was just one of those things—I did not like to take Justin's money and put it in something and not be able to guarantee it to him unless it was a mutual fund. Those usually don't get you in too much trouble. But to put it into a stock and it tubes, and I have lost all your money. That was a hard thing for me to get my head around.

PIEHLER: I mean ethically you really ...

MASSEY: Ethically it was not something ... Now there were guys there who were good at it. I mean they could take your money and talk you into buying XYZ stock and never look back. And you know, some people could do that. Now there were others who were very good. I mean, they were financial planners, and they really tried to do the program as it should be done. I mean it was good training, and at that point Dean Witter really put us through a good training program. And some of the folks who had went through it like I did, we took a six hour exam and they, some who had already been through the bar, said it was very similar to taking a bar exam. I mean it was a rigorous exam, and I fortunately got through it. But it just was not my cup of tea, so I got out of it and started doing some other things. Eventually ended up back in our hometown as a banker. You're thinking, "Oh, he's a banker, he's gonna loan people money now." As it ended up, there were two guys I had gone to high school with who had a little family bank, and they called me and asked if I would think about coming back there and becoming a banker. I said, "I don't know anything about banking. I'm an old infantry officer." But really you don't have to know anything about banking. (Laughter) And ended up went back there—and it was a bank that it was in trouble, I found out, after I got there. But again, it was a

lot of fun. They gave me the small business administration portfolio they had. They had a good number of these SBA loans on the books.

PIEHLER: And this was your hometown.

MASSEY: This was my hometown. They said, "Oh yeah, name recognition. You're a local boy and a hero." And I said, "No, I'm not a hero. But yeah, a local boy." It was interesting to go back, and that was when my wife and I both said, had we stayed there ... You know the old saying, "It's hard to go back home." It was hard to go back home. I mean our family was still there. My dad had passed away, but my mother was still there and her folks were still there. And all these people that we had "grown up with" were still there. But when we came back in having been away for essentially about thirty years, it was ... You know, we were accepted but then again it was just a different atmosphere. I don't know how to explain it other than that I think we had grown, for the want of a better term. And a lot of guys were still the same old guys, and we got along. But still, there was just something that was not ...

PIEHLER: Well one of the things, and it's something that I noticed with the World War II veterans, but also with career people, you had really seen the world.

MASSEY: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: I mean you'd been to Vietnam twice, you'd been to Germany. You'd been all over the United States. And you also had contact with many of these courses. And I get a sense that in small town Tennessee, a big trip is Nashville.

MASSEY: (Laughs) Yeah, or Las Vegas. You know, you start doing Florida for vacations.

PIEHLER: Not to pick on Cindy, but once I was shocked when she said, "I've never been to Memphis." And I thought, "Well what are you waiting for?" Was that some of it?

MASSEY: I think so. That's what I say. We'd both been out and had done a lot of things that these folks had never done. And you tried to talk to them. And you know, they were interested in where we'd been, but they couldn't relate to it. And these were guys that we'd grown up with.

PIEHLER: How had the town changed, having this sort of thirty year gap? Or had it not changed very much?

MASSEY: Well, it had not changed, you know, people had gotten older. That would be one of the things, the folks that I remembered as a kid; the businessmen, they were now the old businessmen. But overall the town had not grown that much.

-----END OF TAPE FIVE, SIDE ONE-----

PIEHLER: You mentioned the portfolio. Any surprises there about how the town operated?

MASSEY: Well, a lot of these loans were not local. The bank had—see we're thirty miles from Huntsville, Alabama. And at that point there was a lot of industry, and still is of course, with the space industry. A lot of these loans were tied into the government-type business, if you will. There were some others that were basic stuff. The surprise was the small business administration loans, of course, they help get people to start their business, but they take everything to include their first born as collateral. And unfortunately, when these things didn't work out right, you had to go in and be the bad guy and say, "Guess what? We may have to sell your house." What I ended up trying to do—and what I was able to do somewhat successfully, although the examiners would just keep pounding at us. 'Cause like I said, the bank was undercapitalized and we were in trouble. Eventually it got bought out by a bigger holding company, and that made things a little easier. They wanted to clean up these bad loans, and the small business administration office up in Nashville, they were interested to know if we were gonna be able to pay these things back or do the foreclosure-type deal. And we had to do that in one or two cases, and that was not any fun. That was not the fun part of it. But what we were able to do was get with these folks and do a work out type situation. You know, reduce their payments, get them a little better organized, if you will, and work with them that way. When I left there, then, most of these loans had kind of turned themselves around with one or two exceptions. And we just had to, like I said, go in and call the note, as they say. One of the things I did learn from that was that the bank business is, the basic principle is "Do you have the collateral, and do you have the ability to repay?"

PIEHLER: And that was it? (Laughs)

MASSEY: That's the bottom line. And if you made a loan with somebody, that's what you had to figure out. The good old boy loans, you know, the Jake Butcher loans that ripped this town wide apart, you couldn't do that anymore. And the examiners, if they caught any inkling that this was someone that you grew up with, that you knew, you know a good old boy, oh, they would just come down on you hard. Having been gone, there were a lot of these folks that I knew way back when, but were they good businessmen today? Some of them weren't. And you really had to work with them. Now, the two brothers that owned the bank, they had inherited it of course, and they had done a lot of these good old boy loans. There was a man I grew up with, I knew them and all that, and their families.

PIEHLER: So, this really was a problem?

MASSEY: Yeah, in a small town bank like that, for sure. When this holding company out of Kentucky bought the bank, they came in with a pretty heavy hand and said, "There's a new sheriff in town and this the way we're going to run it." They cleaned up a lot of the loans, and of course, they had the capital that they could operate, and if they had to mark off some loans or absorb them they could do it. But the brothers couldn't. One of them who was a lawyer, he went back into the lawyer business of course. The other one got out of the banking business. And that's what happened. Like I said, I told a lot of people, "It was great. It was fun. But it wasn't great fun being a banker." (Laughter) And that's when we came to Knoxville. It ... was a tough time.

PIEHLER: When did you return to Knoxville?

MASSEY: We came up here in '93, I think.

PIEHLER: Okay, so you were near your own—I mean you were back for a little over a decade.

MASSEY: Yeah, back here in Knoxville, yeah.

PIEHLER: Well, in your hometown.

MASSEY: Well, the hometown, let's see, I went back there in '86, I guess.

PIEHLER: So about seven years.

MASSEY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And you became a plant manager.

MASSEY: Yeah, up here in Knoxville, yeah. It was kind of a networked thing. Met some folks and they said, "Yeah, we need a guy here to run a plastics plant. You don't know anything about plastics, but you don't need to. We just need someone to organize." Again, it was like going into a unit that was kind of down in a disarrayed state. First thing you do is you go in and clean it up. You know, "Let's clean this place up. Let's get everybody looking good." Then you go from there and try to organize and get people moving in the right direction. 'Cause this particular outfit, and I won't mention names, but they had had a plant manager who was a screamer and a shouter, and as everybody said, a lowdown S.O.B. Didn't know how to do anything. And the morale was just lower than a whale's belly. So I had to overcome that.

PIEHLER: Well it's interesting you say that, because I think some of that image of the military of how it operates, it's a lot of screaming and shouting, when in fact it's really not.

MASSEY: Yeah, you'll get short term results. But long term, you're going to ruin the unit. And that's what had happened here. The folks, the guys who were in charge, per say, they were out getting the business, getting the customers. They had this guy back here running it. And he had run it into the ground. And they had let him. That's why they said, "Hey, we need somebody to come in here and be sane about running this place." I hoped I was. I think I was. Turned it around pretty good.

PIEHLER: I remember we tried to call you for a follow up interview, and you were literally ready to pack up and there was no time. What year did you decide to move to [North] Carolina?

MASSEY: Well, we went down there the summer of 2003 and bought a second home down there. We still had the condo up here at Cherokee Bluff at that point. And we had envisioned going back and forth, staying down there awhile and staying up here awhile. Well we did that for about a year. Finally, in about 2004 we said, "Hey, let's go to the beach full-time." It's a lot more fun down there. (Laughter) And Justin knows where I'm talking about down there. I mean there was a lot of things to do down there. Of course, I had retired, so we went off down there. Then

finally we said, “Let’s just do full-time down here.” ‘Cause we were going back and forth, and then finally in 2004 we moved full-time. Put the condo up for sale, and it took awhile to get rid of it, but that’s what we ended up doing. As I tell folks, I got down there and there’s a hundred golf courses or more. Although some of them have shut down there recently. But one of the things you do is you get a little job on a golf course, and you get free golf. So I put in an application in two or three places, and I got called and this guy said, “Yeah, you can come over and be a ranger.” You know, the player assistant or whatever you call them. Ranger marshals. And I said, “Yeah, that sounded like a neat little thing to do.” You ride around and make sure people keep up. All this kind of stuff. Well, little did I know this particular course was tied into an umbrella of six courses. So, I have access to six different courses. And if you can get on the course during the low season, it’s free golf. So that makes it pretty nice. So, as I say, I work for free golf now. (Laughter) We get a little minimum wage type thing. I worked my way up, though. I’m up to the bag drop. The people come in and unload their bags, and then you load them on a cart and send them on their way. And it becomes surprisingly—it’s a tip type situation where guys will pop a dollar or two at you for unloading. (Laughter) I mean you’re out working slave labor out here, so to speak. But it’s kind of an interesting—and you meet a lot of different people.

PIEHLER: Do they have any suspicion of what your career was like?

MASSEY: Oh yeah. A lot of them do. A lot of them were prior military. They were the grunt level, and they say, “Oh, you were a colonel.” And I say, “Hey guys, I’m just a good old guy. Don’t worry about that.” But we’ve talked about it a little bit, and I ask them, “What did you do?” And it’s kind of interesting to get the different view of it.

PIEHLER: I’m curious, the free golf. Do you have a hard time not working? Is that also part of why you’re doing this?

MASSEY: Yeah, I couldn’t sit around at the house all day long. And neither could my wife. As a matter of fact, she had been a territorial assistant for Hallmark up here in Knoxville, and had all of East Tennessee around these stores. You know, retail merchandising is an interesting thing. I had never been—and she had never been involved in it either. And she got in it. So she rides a circuit and makes sure that the girls are putting up the cards correctly for Krogers and all these different grocery stores. You know, that’s not done by the grocery store itself. These retail merchandisers go in. So, we get down there, and we walk into a Kroger down there, and she wondered who the person was. She knows where to go, and she flipped this book open, and she said, “Well, maybe they need some RMs [Retail Merchandisers] down here.” ‘Cause she can’t sit at home either, she’s got too much energy. She called this lady, and she said, “You are a Godsend. We’re needing a TA, which is a territorial assistant.” Well, she now has from Camp Lejeune down to Georgetown on the East Coast. So, it has become a tar baby. But again, it keeps us both kind of busy and keeps us out of the house. Having a reason to get up. As I tell people, every day’s a Saturday or Sunday once you retire. And the only way that you can tell the difference is that the paper’s thicker on Sunday. (Laughter) So you gotta get up and be doing something.

PIEHLER: Have you ever joined any veteran’s organization?

MASSEY: You know this is interesting. I did join the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] down there. Had never joined prior to this.

PIEHLER: Now this is down in ...

MASSEY: Down in the Carolinas. And prior to that I had, I don't know, I guess this is just kind of my view or background. I didn't need to have a place to go to sit and drink and tell war stories. That's never been my ... But I thought, "Well, I'll join the VFW down here." 'Cause I had run into some guys, and they said they had a nice little clubhouse. Looking in the papers I saw they did some things. You know, they were always supporting this, that, and the other. And I thought, "Well, that'll give me something to do." Well I joined, and I have to be very honest, it was not a good experience. Number one, and this is a personal thing of mine, you go into the bar ... and it was totally full of smoke. Just killed me. And I said, "I'm not gonna come in here and sit and have a drink and just be inundated with this smoke." It was just an atmosphere that I really didn't get into, so I let my dues go this year.

PIEHLER: What else about ... Is it too many war stories or ...

MASSEY: Yeah, it was just kind of an atmosphere that I just didn't feel comfortable in. And I don't know if it was ... maybe I didn't give it a chance, but the initial feeling when I walked into this place and they had their meetings ... it was run okay, but you're sitting there thinking ... It was just, I don't know. Just wasn't my cup of tea.

PIEHLER: Well it's interesting because most veterans never join a veteran's organization. So that's why I'm sort of curious.

MASSEY: Well, one of the things they are saying is you need to get the younger guys in. 'Cause a lot of these guys are older and hey, I respect them because they've done their time, done their duty. I say this, and it's not as a ... class thing if you will, or a caste system or whatever, but it seems the majority are prior enlisted. Now, with that said, that doesn't say that I'm better than they are or that I should be due deference because I'm an officer. But it just seemed like that was ...

PIEHLER: That was the culture of it.

MASSEY: That was the culture of it. And that's okay. I mean, I'm sure there were some officers there, but it seemed like the majority of this particular group—I have to say this also, now this again will kind of mark me as far as where I came from, you know, there's a guy who wrote a book by the name of Massey, as a matter of fact, *What You Are is Where You Were When*. That was the title of his book, this professor out in Texas by the name of Massey. But in any event ... I was raised in the South. I'd say ninety-nine percent of these guys were New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania guys. (Laughter) And it's different.

PIEHLER: Oh, it's a very different culture. Particular of that era, if they're Korean, WWII and Vietnam.

MASSEY: And of course you talk with some of these other guys, the neighborhood bar is a thing for them. You know, down south it's not ... it's not anything that I grew up in. So, for them to have a place to go to, and they sit around and talk and smoke and joke and go on, that was all part of their nature. Well, that's just not me. I've never been a bar hound, I guess you'd say. And again, that's no reflection on them. I'm sure they're some nice guys. Some that I met were. But anyhow, as far as joining ... I'm not much of a joiner, I guess you'd say.

PIEHLER: Well I know firsthand because you came to Celebrate Freedom, which was several years ago. So you've talked quite a bit about the Vietnam conflict, and you've written a memoir. Have you been back to Vietnam?

MASSEY: No, I have not. It's interesting, an older brother of mine who did his time in the Air Force National Guard, active duty, he has taken a trip back to Vietnam. 'Course, he likes to travel. And he brought some pictures back. We haven't really sat down and discussed it in full, but you know he went to all the different tourist places that they have set up over there. It's kind of interesting. They take them through a punji pit, and they take them down into the tunnels that they had and show how the tunnel rats operated and all that stuff. He asked me my opinion on that, and I said, "Those guys were crazy." You know, number one, we ran into tunnel complexes, and I just backed off and blew them up. As far as I was concerned that was a bunker or a safe haven for them. We blew 'em up. I wasn't going to send anybody down. I wasn't going to go down, and if I wasn't going to go down I wasn't going to send anybody. (Laughter) So, we just used our C4 and rigged them up and blew them up.

PIEHLER: Well 'cause other units, I mean they ...

MASSEY: Oh they had these guys that would take a .45 and a bayonet and go off down there and look for what they could find. I just said, "Hey, if there's weapons and caches of ammo down there, we'll blow it up in place. If they want to dig it out that's something they can do later on, on their own time." (Laughter) So that was my approach to the tunnels, although we didn't run into that many down in the area we were. It was north of us that they had more of them. But we ran into a few, and we just blew them up.

PIEHLER: Any curiosity to go back?

MASSEY: Yeah, you know, it'd be interesting to go back and ... I think they've developed the roads a little better, 'cause back then the only way to get around was by helicopter. There were some roads in and around the cities. You know, it'd be interesting, I guess, to fly out over the areas where we were just to see how things had changed. It'd be interesting to go up into the central highlands where the Montagnards were to see if their plight has changed any. I've got a suspicion that they're probably still tending their little rice patches and growing their little Vietnamese pigs and living pretty simple lives. I don't know that they've probably improved that much, maybe they have.

PIEHLER: Back in the states, did any of the officers you served with make it back to the states, that you know of? Because you mentioned this one officer who was quite professional.

MASSEY: Yeah, Thieu Ta Bao I have two letters. We corresponded, and I lost contact. And I've got an idea ... there was a pretty high price on his head. And I would say he probably got policed up.

PIEHLER: He didn't make it out.

MASSEY: He didn't make it out. Now I heard that one of the interpreters we had made it out, but I don't know that for a fact. But as far as any of the other folks that I worked with, I don't know that any of them got out.

PIEHLER: There's been no reunion where you ran into someone back in the states.

MASSEY: No. Earlier on I mentioned this lieutenant I had as a company commander, Lieutenant Sauvageot. Very intense individual, to say the least. He became the chief interpreter for the ambassador to Vietnam. I mean he literally got over there and immersed himself in the culture and the language and everything else. He was at Leavenworth ... as an instructor. And he had married a Vietnamese girl and had brought her whole family back once they could get them out. But he was a unique individual in that he was just so intense. And like I said, he became the chief interpreter for the ambassador to Vietnam. And then of course once it kind of fell, he came back and got back into the Army.

PIEHLER: Was he there in '75 when it fell?

MASSEY: I think so. I haven't talked to him direct, but yeah.

PIEHLER: That was the sense you got? That he ...

MASSEY: Yeah. And then of course he got out and got his family out. Then he was at Leavenworth, and I'm not sure where he is now. We left Leavenworth and I lost track of him. But he was an interesting individual. We were in ranger school together, even though he was a company commander and he had left. He was first lieutenant and I was second lieutenant. He could never learn how to tie the knots. For all the rope bridges and all that stuff. And he would come and wake me up. I mean, sleep is a premium in ranger school. (Laughter) You get two hours at one time, that's a lot. And he was so intense that he would come and wake me up, and we would go into the latrine and I would try to teach him how to tie these knots. I mean he just wanted to learn it so ... And I tried to work with him and he'd get 'em tied pretty good, and then the next day hell, he'd get out there and ...

PIEHLER: He just never could.

MASSEY: But other than that he was a brilliant individual. He really was. But I just thought it was one of those things that were kind of funny. And we've laughed about it since then. When I saw him, I said, "Hey did you ever learn how to turn them?" He said, "Oh man, I never learned how to tie those knots." (Laughter) I mean he got through the course okay ... that wouldn't fail you. But if he ever had to use them other than that, he probably couldn't.

PIEHLER: The people that you served with, how many people have you stayed in touch with?

MASSEY: You know it's interesting. Not that many. I mean you would think that you would have this ... Some of the folks that we've stayed in touch with, for the most part, were our Leavenworth guys.

PIEHLER: That was a very tight group?

MASSEY: Yeah, that was a tight group during that timeframe. Now with the advent of e-mails and all this, it's starting to ... You'll reach one guy and he'll say, "Yeah, I know so-and-so." As a matter of fact, just recently there was a guy who had been a lieutenant when we were at Fort Benning together. He sent me an e-mail and said, "Hey, do you remember me? We were together." And this kind of stuff. We were in the same unit, we weren't that close. I kind of generally remember him, but as far as ... Like for instance, the black lieutenant I talked about, Lieutenant Randall. Marshall Randall. I've done the Google, I've done everything. 'Cause we'd like to get back in touch with him. 'Cause he went one way and I went one way and we never were able to get back with him. And I think it would be interesting to see where he turned up. A guy down in Mississippi, we correspond every now and then. We go by and visit, 'cause we were lieutenants together. Then there's my JAG [Judge Advocate General] officer, my lawyer as I call him, that lives above us there on the beach. They moved back there. But other than that, there's just not that many that we've maintained contact with. Christmas cards, we do the Christmas card thing with a lot of them.

PIEHLER: Well I think the older army, the interwar army, where people stayed on post forever, it seemed like it was ... Whereas your army was constantly moving.

MASSEY: Yeah, we were moving. One of the things, just to give you an idea, my wife made a "This Is Your Life" photo album for our girls. And our oldest daughter, when she started going through it, she started putting down addresses based on when she was two years old, three years old, whatever. She presented these to them on their eighteenth birthday, 'cause we kept a lot of pictures of them. It's a real keepsake for 'em now. But when we got through with that, up to her eighteenth birthday, we said, "My God. She has had eighteen different addresses." Now, some of those were short ... We'd move across posts. But eighteen different addresses in eighteen years. Now that's pretty significant. And you know, it was just one of those little things that kind of jumped out at us when we started doing that for her. And our middle daughter ... she had about as many. And our son, he came along a little later and he didn't have quite that much moving around.

PIEHLER: And your son went into ROTC.

MASSEY: He went into ROTC, and my oldest daughter had an ROTC scholarship, and came to UT. And after about maybe the first year of it she came home and said, "This is not for me." I said, "Hey, better you make that decision now." And she was all concerned that I'd be upset, and I said, "Hey, it's your decision. It's not mine. I'll support you whichever way you want to go." So we had to go to the board, because you don't just walk away from an ROTC

scholarship. They did release her from the overall program, but there was a payback situation. I had to pay back. That was part of it, I knew that. Our son, he bounded along and ... I'll tell one story on him, you'll appreciate this Justin. After he got into ROTC, when we were at Bragg when I was there running the Special Forces school, I would take him with me at night a lot of times. I would say, "You stay right on my right hip. Don't you get lost." This was totally against all rules and regulations. (Laughter) If the chopper had ever gone down or the jeep had ever wrecked, I'd have been in deep trouble. But I'd fly him out on choppers at night and we'd go in and inspect stuff. (Laughter) He stayed right with me. I mean this was a big adventure for him, 'cause he was probably in grade school. He was just a kid. Well when he was in the ROTC program over here he had a transportation major who was teaching a tactics class, patrolling. And he was coming off with some stuff, and my son tells me the story, so I'm sure it's probably true, the major asked him if he knew what this was all about, and my son said, "Sir, I've probably been on more patrols than you have." (Laughter) Not the most correct thing to say to your instructor. Of course he got chewed real hard after the class. But anyhow ... kind of interesting.

PIEHLER: I mean it sounds like ... did your son ...

MASSEY: Well, he got into ROTC, went through the advanced course. And this was in the early 90's. Justin will understand this. When they started doing assessments at that point, the Army was drawing down. He didn't get active duty. Crushed him. He got armored branch. And I said, "Well, let me see what I can find out." So I still had some friends at the DA [Department of Army] level. In particular, had a guy who was a liaison from the senator's office to the military or vice versa. But in any event, I called him and he checked into it. He said, "Let me tell you, it's a numbers game." And it is a numbers game, as you well know. You know, when I went on everybody got active duty.

PIEHLER: And now everyone gets active duty.

MASSEY: Yeah, now. But back then they were drawing down and they assessed ... 6,600 records, I think it was. You slice off the top for the West Point guys and the DNGs [Distinguished Military Graduates] and their scholarship guys, they're gonna get active duty. And they only took in 2,200. So they took the top third out of this 6,600. Well my son was down in the last two-thirds. I don't know where he was in that area, but he wasn't up on the top and he didn't get active duty. I mean it's that simple. The guy told him, "Hey, it's a numbers game." This General Lutz that I alluded to, his son was in ROTC. And I called him about it, and unfortunately his son had been killed in a car wreck. Our sons were contemporaries, if you will. He made the comment to me, "I'm not sure my Jojo would have made it. 'Cause it's a real numbers game. I can tell you that." 'Cause he was not on active duty, but he was still involved in the military as a consultant. He just said that. It becomes a numbers game at this point. Now today, sure, they're needing everybody.

PIEHLER: It's kind of interesting, when you tell that story I get the sense that in the early 90's the Army shrank.

MASSEY: Big time.

PIEHLER: With good reason.

MASSEY: Yeah, we didn't have a real threat then. And they were cutting back. And they program this out. They say, "Yeah, we'll assess X number and that will fill up these slots, and down the road we'll have enough folks in here to man the force structure." Well now, they need everybody they can get.

MINTZ: Nowadays, if you don't sign a guaranteed reserve forces duty contract, you're going active duty whether you want to or not.

MASSEY: Well okay. Like I said, during my day and time it was basically, "Hey, you want active duty and you want infantry branch? Sign up and away you go." 'Cause they needed everybody, you know, to fill the structure.

PIEHLER: You alluded to this in the beginning ... but as someone who was in Special Forces, you could not help but think a little bit about Afghanistan and Iraq. What's your thoughts, having been out of the military now for a number of years?

MASSEY: I've also alluded to the fact that I believe in going balls out. We went in, I think, with all the right intentions. More particularly in Afghanistan. That's a tough area. We didn't have the folks in place. Human intelligence had been cut out of the military, and that's one of the big mistakes we made in our general defense structure. You gotta have people on the ground that are native. We had that back in my day and time. We don't have that now. I don't know if they're trying to build it up, but it's a long process, as you well know. We didn't have a language capability. I mean, I'm sure there were folks that were taking Farsi and Urdu and whatever else they speak over there, but I'm sure there are a bunch more taking it now than were four or five years ago. And we didn't have the linguists. So there were some things working against us at that point. They didn't have an end plan when they went into Iraq. I said this earlier on too. Based on talking to a good friend of mine, General McCaffery, he was a division commander during the first Desert Storm. The 24th Infantry Division that made the big envelopment around the flanks there. And I talked to him about it, and he said, "Oh man, I was sitting back in the TOC [Tactical Operations Center] and I was getting these reports of X number of enemy KIA, CIA. These tremendous numbers. Friendly, no WIA, no KIA. And he says, "This can't be right. Somebody's blowing smoke at me." 'Cause we had already programmed we'd have X number of casualties." So he said, "Man, I jumped in a chopper and flew up there and sure enough, it's like shooting fish in a barrel. These guys were coming out of their holes with their hands up. At that point we should have taken a left turn and gone to Baghdad, but we were told to hold in place once we liberated Kuwait." Of course, at that point ... it was a UN mandate to get them out of Kuwait and then hold, and that's ... what we did. Well with that said, we do it again. We go back in there, we roll into Baghdad, kick everybody out. And at that point we look around and say, "Well, what the hell do we do now?" You know, it's like a dog that catches a car. What are you going to do with it now? And we didn't have a plan. I mean, that's been my feel of it. I'm sure there's a lot of things I don't know about it, but at some point early on—and I believe in assassinations, I don't know if this is going to ... Three thousand people were assassinated on 9/11 in New York as far as I'm concerned. That's my take on it. Earlier on we had a non-

assassination policy that was developed. Your Special Ops guys can do that, and do it very effectively. The Mossad in Israel can do it very effectively. I think it can be effective now. A lot of people say, "Oh, we start assassinations that opens up a real can of worms. They're going to do the same thing." They're doing it anyway. We might as well beat 'em to the damn punch as far as I'm concerned. Now, with that said, earlier on there's one or two of the clerics that I think we should have taken out. In particular, Al-Sadr. He should have been taken out. Three years later, four years later, what do we have? We have to live with this guy who is stirring and fomenting revolution. Now, whether or not killing him would have precluded this from happening, you don't know. But I think it would have gone a long way, 'cause that militia I think would have maybe disbanded. 'Cause a lot of them were a part of the old military structure. Hindsight's twenty-twenty. Yeah, we should have kept some of the military structure in place that Saddam ran, because he ran that thing out of total fear. And those people, I think their allegiances could have been ...

PIEHLER: Redirected.

MASSEY: Redirected. But that's, you know, hindsight. But overall I still believe in brute force in a lot of cases. We are very conscious of the collateral damage, we're very conscious of the civilian populace. Which we should be. But at the same time, there's some times that you just have to go balls out. And we haven't done that, so we're kind of paying the price for it now. Now I haven't been on the ground. And I don't think we're getting a real true picture of what's going on over there through our media.

PIEHLER: Well the one thing that struck me about the war was just how dangerous Iraq is. I mean, at least for Americans. Even in the green zone. And I just sort of compare it to Vietnam, where there were actually secure areas.

MASSEY: Yeah, we had secure areas. And we didn't have the religious, there were religious factions in Vietnam, but they weren't as fanatical as this bunch over here is. All in the name of religion. And it's tough. You know ... I haven't been on the ground, and these IEDs [improvised explosive devices] and all this stuff. And you say, "Man there ought to be a way to counter these things." I know we're trying to develop all kinds of techniques to signal, pick 'em up, all this stuff. And it just seems like, they're just free to put these things out. Now whether or not we're setting patterns ... That was one of the things in Vietnam, we said, "You don't go out the same way every day. You don't set a pattern or you're gonna get ambushed. You're gonna get booby trapped. You gotta go different ways." Well, in the cities there's not that many ways you can go. For instance, in Vietnam, we never walked on top of the rice paddies. That's a sure way to get blown up. You don't walk down trails. I mean, there were just a lot of things you had to do. Now in Iraq, maybe they're trying to do that I'm sure, but ... And of course the suicide bombers. We never had that in Vietnam that I'm aware of. Boy, that's a nugget that's hard to crack. If they're willing to strap it on their body and go blow themselves up, you're not gonna ... It's tough to figure it out, whether or not you can go through and police all this stuff up. Of course, the borders are wide open apparently. That's where all this stuff is apparently getting in there. Can you close the borders? You're talking a lot of troops.

PIEHLER: Yeah, they're big borders.

MASSEY: It'd be tough. But overall, I think, earlier on our intentions were right to go in there, but it just hasn't turned out right. And I think some of the mistakes were that we just didn't go in there full bore enough and didn't take out the right kind of people. I mean that's my view of it.

PIEHLER: Do you have any more questions?

MINTZ: I've got a few more questions, going back to when you were a professor of military science. How did you run your ROTC battalion there?

MASSEY: At Eastern Washington? When I was a PMS? I had good instructors. I had a cadre that was a top-notch group. We instituted some things—here again, everybody's got their different quirks and different things they're going to do to it. We were a pretty small unit. Of course, by then most ROTC units had drawn down pretty small. I forget exactly how many we had there. And by this time we had females in the program. One of the first things I did was I said, "We're going to get in shape. We're going to do PT." 'Cause I harkened back to when I was here at UT, we did that and we did it hard. It was beneficial. If nothing else it gives you a structure and it gives you something to really work with young cadets. We also, I let my instructors pretty much have free reign. I said, "You guys teach your subjects, and I'll supervise it and give you support where I can, but it's not going to be done my way. If yours is working, we'll go that way." We had a few scholarship students, not that many. But Eastern Washington University had traditionally been a very strong ROTC program. They had had one through the years. ... Good old country boys, a lot of them, from that part of the state. So we were able to recruit pretty good on campus and get a pretty good number of people in there. But again, we just tried to make it exciting to them, if you will. Tried to make it something they would enjoy coming to. And I found that if you kind of worked the kids and challenged them, they want to be challenged. That's kind of the approach we took to it. We tried to take them on some "field trips." Got over to Fort Louis a few times.

MINTZ: When did they move the advance camp from Fort Benning to Fort Louis? Do you have a year on that?

MASSEY: Yeah, we ran the advance camp out at Louis when I was there in '81, '82. 'Cause ... I had a bunch of guys under me. We ran the compass course and the commo [communications] course. Oh golly, there were two or three things under my umbrella, and I had these cadre in there than ran these things. The big thing was the compass course. It was brutal. We had to tweak it a little bit because we kept getting people lost. (Laughter) It was tough terrain we'd set it up in. We kind of had to work on that a little bit. But yeah, the early 80's is when I remember we had an advance camp out at Fort Louis. Now, I don't know if they weren't still conducting one at Benning or not. Are they strictly out at Fort Louis now?

MINTZ: They're strictly at Fort Louis now. Everybody goes there.

MASSEY: Everybody goes to Fort Louis? Well that's interesting, I don't remember if at that point if we had all of them out there or not. The other thing I had was the slide for life.

MINTZ: Oh yeah, that's fun.

MASSEY: Well, it was a fun thing to do. And I had a real hard-charging captain who ran that thing for me. He made it pretty tough for them.

PIEHLER: Actually, for those who are not of the ROTC world, you might need to explain that.

MASSEY: The slide for life?

PIEHLER: Yes.

MASSEY: Well, you went through a series of things, and you ended up climbing up ...

MINTZ: Something like eighty feet.

MASSEY: Eighty feet up in the air. Walk across a flat—they had it flattened out on the top, and you had to go over some steps, and it's a balance thing. It's pretty scary up there. 'Course you're over water. I mean if you fall off, it's bombs away. (Laughter) Then you climb up to this thing, and I guess they've still got the two-handle deal.

MINTZ: It's on a rope. You climb out on the rope and you just let go.

MASSEY: Let go. Did they have the Ranger tab out there?

MINTZ: Recondo

MASSEY: Recondo. That's right, we couldn't do the Ranger tab. You'd climb out on a rope and you'd smack this thing and request permission to drop. And you'd drop thirty feet, maybe?

MINTZ: Thirty-seven feet, I think.

MASSEY: Oh, okay.

MINTZ: And you'd climb this eighty-foot tower and slide down a zip line. And let go when you get to the bottom.

MASSEY: Yeah, that was always fun to see how people, and like Justin was saying, you slide down this thing, it's got a pulley. You're zipping down this thing. Well the key thing is—did they wave a flag at you, when to drop?

MINTZ: Yeah.

MASSEY: Okay, we tried to make sure they didn't just go all the way in. But a lot of guys, they didn't keep their feet up. And when they hit the water, they'd slap forward.

MINTZ: Faceplant.

MASSEY: Yeah, there you go. He knows the terminology. It's bringing back some memories. But the key thing was to hold your feet up so you hit in butt first. But if you let those feet down, boy, it would smack you down. (Laughter) You had to swim out. I forget how deep the water was, it probably wasn't that deep.

MINTZ: We had life jackets on when we did it.

MASSEY: Hmm. I don't remember that with our guys. I don't know if we had life jackets. Well we probably did. By then you had to make sure that everything was pretty safe. But yeah, so that started in '81, '82 when I was out there. I was thinking they had some at Benning, but maybe not. So it's there full time now. That's good.

MINTZ: Were there any cadets that you had that you were particularly proud of that made it way up in the ranks?

MASSEY: You know, and this may sound—I retired at that point, so I don't know if any of my cadets ... have gone on up. And the cadre that I had, I kind of lost touch with them. They would probably know more than I would if some of the cadets had gone on up. I really don't have a feel for that. We had some good cadets, and I'm sure they made good officers. But I don't know.

MINTZ: Last question I've got. What would you say the most rewarding thing you did in the Army was?

MASSEY: Hmm.

PIEHLER: It's a good question. It's a great end-of-interview question.

MASSEY: That is a good question. I guess in a very general term ... you had the mission and the welfare of the men, and those go hand in hand. And if you don't take care of the men your mission's not going to get accomplished. That's the way I always tried to run my units and always tried to treat people. Treat them like they should be. Then the mission will take care of itself. On an individual basis, now this is one I'm really proud of, I had a kid ... at Fort Benning who was in the scout dog detachment. He was training to be a scout dog handler. He came in one day and he said, "Sir, I need to go home. I thought about going AWOL, but I felt like I could come to you and request that I need to go home. I've got a family situation I need to take care of." I said, "Okay. If you don't mind me asking, what is it?" He said, "Well, I've got a younger brother and sister, and our mother has left them." That's tough. I got that young man, and I said, "I'll tell you what I want you to do. You go home, and you take care of your young brother and sister. And when you think you can come back, you get in touch with me. At that point we will have you a discharge to go take care of your family." This kid was sincere. I could tell he was. So, we do this. About six months later, he walks into my office, I'm still at Fort Benning, he's in a suit and tie. He had gotten out of the military, he had gotten into a manager training program,

and he was taking care of his siblings. He said, "I wanted to come back and say thank you." To me that was ... I'm sorry.

PIEHLER: No, it's a great story to end with.

MASSEY: Well, I always tried to take care of my men. And that one sticks out.

PIEHLER: Well, I have to say, I enjoyed when you spoke and Celebrate Freedom and I enjoyed your first interview. And I have to say it's been a real pleasure.

MASSEY: Well it's been fun for me. Like you said, somewhere down the road somebody reads it and gets something out of it, maybe.

PIEHLER: Well, Justin has been reading your first interview. He's gotten to know you very well from transcribing the first interview. But I really want to thank you very much for coming back.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----