

**CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

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INTERVIEWEINTERVIEWER: John A. Stewart

INTERVIEWER: David W. Edgecombe

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Transcription of Interview Number 31D 6 STEWART

John A. Stewart

Interviewed 14 December, 2005

By David W. Edgecombe

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program interview with Major General J.A. Stewart. Recorded on December 14th, 2005 at Kingston, Ontario.

Interviewed by David W. Edgecombe. Tape one side one.

STEWART: My name is John Stewart, Major General retired.

I joined the Military in 1949 when I attended Royal Roads Military College in Victoria. From there, I went to RMC and I graduated from RMC in 1953. From 53 to 54, as was the requirement at that time, I went to Queen's for a year to get my degree in Civil Engineering.

In 1951 after my second summer training I received my pilot's wings.

In 1954 to 55 I attended the Advanced Flying School, Pilot Gunnery School and Flying Instructors' School. In 55 to 56 I went to Moose Jaw, SK as a flying instructor.

In 56 to 59 I went to 2 Construction and Maintenance Unit. I had, in fact, remustered from pilot to Tech CE. Question is why? I wanted to pursue an engineering career but, in fact, at that time if you were in the technical branch of the RCAF one could still continue to fly as a pilot. Indeed, until the unification in 67 I continued to fly currently as a pilot. The big difference being, pilot list got a hell of a lot more money than I did. [laughs] I got my, I think it was, \$30 a month risk allowance but I was able to do that and I flew a number of different types. In fact, I was not losing something. I was gaining something else by going into the Tech CE profession, or career I should say.

From 56 to 59 I was involved in a number of projects with 2 CMU in Fort Nelson, in Whitehorse, Penhold, and in Gander. I would like to mention Penhold in particular. That project involved the restoration of some of the runways and tarmacs at the airports. I was advised by my boss, who was Wing Commander Peeler[?], at the time that I was going to do a slurry seal on one of the runways. And I said to the boss, "What is a slurry seal?"

And he said, "I don't know but here's some literature." Well, to make a long story short, we did the first slurry seal on a runway anywhere in Canada. In fact, it was the first slurry seal of any kind in western Canada.

I have to mention WO1 Gillman. As part of the project we had to create a batching plant and we had to create a spreader. And Warrant Officer Gillman, I would see him running

from here to there and wherever, and out on the Prairie a batching plant arose and, sure enough, we ended up with a spreader that worked. This man was just magnificent in putting together the nuts and bolts of this particular project and the slurry seal was a success.

After that I went to RMC from 59 to 62 where I was a lecturer in the Civil Engineering Department. While there, basically on my own, it was a different situation at the time. I went to Queen's and got a Master's Degree in Civil Engineering.

[From] 62 to 64 I went to Training Command Headquarters in Winnipeg where I was the chief technical person within that organization. Then from 64 to 66 I went to Rivers, Manitoba as the BCEO. [From] 66 to 67, one of the few Air Force people that had the "privilege" and pleasure of going to the Canadian Army Staff College and, indeed, I found that quite an interesting and an enjoyable year.

[From] 67 to 68 I went to Lahr. I was in the SO CE Branch in Lahr. My job as a Squadron Leader was to, in fact, coordinate and run the infrastructure program that was required, or was the result of the move of the Canadian Forces from France to Lahr. That was a very extensive program and I am quite proud of the achievements that were obtained. I could mention names of other people who were involved in it [missed word].

After being there for one year I was called into the commander's office, the Canadian Air Division commander's office, and he said, "You're being promoted to Lieutenant Colonel."

My first reaction after wanting to be in Europe so badly for so many years was, "Where am I going?" and much to my delight I became the first engineer to be the comptroller of the Air Division. As such, I now became part of the commander's senior staff.

This was both a learning curve for me in learning some parts of the financial world, some parts of the org and management world, but it was also a great two years. The most difficult time we had in that two-year period was working out the arrangements, particularly as it concerned establishments for the move of the Army down to Lahr, which occurred in 1970. We wrote the establishments with very strict guidelines. We didn't write what we wanted but what we thought was right but we did the best we could within the guidelines that had been established by NDHQ.

So, two years as the comptroller in Lahr then I was transferred back to FMC in Montreal. But about six weeks before leaving, I received a phone call, which said: Would I mind going to SHAPE in Belgium for two years? Of course, I had to hesitate about a nanosecond before I said, "Yes, I'll go to SHAPE."

So I spent two years in SHAPE in the NATO Infrastructure Branch writing criteria and also reviewing projects in Greece and in the United Kingdom. I'll come back to that later when we come to another the question that is on here.

Then after that I was transferred to – I don't know if it was CFHQ or NDHQ, probably CFHQ. I went to CFHQ and became the first ever Director of Base Planning and Development, DBPD, working as a lieutenant colonel directly for the Vice Chief.

In that year we wrote the ground rules, the terms of reference, the *modus operandi* for out DBPD. I don't know if it still exists but we kind of had fun doing that. I kind of had fun working for the Vice Chief, who, by the way, at time was Chester Hull and a super, super person in my opinion.

INTERVIEWER: My experience in dealing with DBPD was they kept the Forces honest with their development plans.

STEWART: I think that's true. Yes, I think that's true. We had some good people working there but I can recall, just as aside, JADDEX wandered into the office one day. He wanted me to look into a question that had absolutely nothing to do with DBPD. I think it had to do with Staff College entry quotas or something like that. I wrote a paper and he came in about four days later and he said, "Excellent paper! Well done!" And the reason it was excellent and well done was because it said what he wanted to hear, unbeknownst to me. That was JADDEX. That was kind of fun.

Anyway, after that I went to NDC. NDC was at that time really like a sabbatical. I thought it was an outstanding course. I got a hell of a lot out of it. I met a hell of a lot of people all over the world. It's just a shame they had to cancel the program. I don't know much about their new one which is a shorter one. NDC was a place where you could put as much into as you wanted. If you wanted to do absolutely nothing, you could do absolutely nothing, but most people really got benefit out of it.

NDC, I went from there to DCEC as a full colonel. I was promoted while at NDC. I don't think I have to go into what the responsibilities of DCEC were. You probably know them more currently than I do.

One of the things, and I think I am getting into question two here, Dave.

INTERVIEWER: We can pick this up as we go along.

STEWART: OK, let me just finish this off, then. So that was DCEC. I didn't enjoy DCEC. I didn't like doing that. The bits and pieces of finance and that sort of thing but I did enjoy doing the NATO Infrastructure thing we can talk about later.

From there, I went to Winnipeg as DCOS MILE for two years. Back to Ottawa as DGQ for two years. Then to RMC as commandant for two years. Then CCP for three years, 82-85 as a two star. Then, of course, much to my joy, delight and satisfaction

Colonel Commandant from 94-97. We probably can get into some of things I might have mentioned here as we go through these questions.

INTERVIEWER: Now, I would like to go back to 74, 75, 76 timeframe when you basically initiated a program that had NATO Infrastructure funding applied to construction projects in support of NATO activities in Canada. What was your position at that point and how difficult was this to sell to both Canada and NATO?

STEWART: I was DCEC. The idea, sort of, came to me while I was at SHAPE doing NATO Infrastructure and seeing what other countries were getting reimbursed for in terms of their construction for the Navy and Air Force. The idea then entered into my mind, “Why wasn’t Canada doing this?” However, I didn’t do anything right away. I came back to Canada. As DBPD I was really too busy to get involved with that.

So I went off to NDC. While at NDC I wrote George Galley, a Brigadier-General Galley, who was DGQ at the time and who also had served at SHAPE a number of years ago and said, “What about this idea? I think you should pursue it.” I got a lovely letter back from him saying, “You’re coming here as DCEC so you can pursue when you get here.” So that’s exactly what happened.

It was an interesting process and I’ve forgotten a lot of the details. The first thing I had to do was get approval in principle within the department as to whether I could proceed with this initiative. We were talking, basically, about construction at Greenwood and at Halifax where we had the long-range patrol aircraft on NATO missions. Of course, we had our ships doing NATO things with Standing Force Naval Atlantic, plus the visiting of other NATO ships so forth. So that’s the two areas I was involved in. I first had to get some approval in principle at a reasonable high level before I went any further.

With Galley’s blessing and encouragement. The first place that I really went to – well, I did some informal asking around within the Navy hierarchy and so forth. The resistance I got was from one Navy lieutenant commander who thought this was going to destroy Canadian naval sovereignty.

I went from there and approached then ADM (POL), John Anderson, and I received support in principle from John. [pause] I don’t know if it was true or not but that was what I told that’s what he was saying. [chuckles]

INTERVIEWER: Well in any event...

STEWART: Doesn’t matter.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned the Navy’s reluctance at a fairly low level. I experienced it later on at a fairly high senior level when we were looking at things like how much of one of the jetties under ship repair was to be covered off; Halifax Main Base Supply Project. This whole notion of somehow NATO had ownership, and therefore could force us to accept NATO ships and so on into them, came up. Comment on that?

STEWART: Well that’s almost identical to some of the resistance I had. This one particular Navy commander – and, really, I felt at that time that that was really irrelevant.

History has shown it was irrelevant. They were going to use our ports. They weren't going to demand that they have a part of that facility. It really was irrelevant and, fortunately, it really wasn't listened to.

INTERVIEWER: Did you run into any, within the department that is, did you run into any resistance on the basis, "Well, I mean, that's money really spent for the frontlines over there with countries that were devastated and so on. And we're rich and we can stand up for our own."

STEWART: No.

INTERVIEWER: No.

STEWART: No. None that I can recall except maybe from that Navy chap...[laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Were the Americans doing the same sort of thing?

STEWART: No, and I'll come to that in a minute.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

STEWART: So the next thing that I then did to pursue this was, I went to SACLANT in Norfolk, Virginia, where we had a two star at the time. I think it was Mainguy but I can't be sure. Basically, as the senior Canadian in SACLANT I wanted to get his blessing before I pursued anything. Because anything we did do would be through SACLANT as the major NATO command.

I went down there and I have to mention at this time a guy that really helped me all the through this and, in fact, then ran the program once it was approved initially, was Jack Wiebe. Major retired Jack Wiebe. Do you remember Jack?

INTERVIEWER: Very well.

STEWART: So Jack and I went down to SACLANT and we basically only saw the Canadians down there as I recall. We might have seen others but it, basically, was the agreement or the support of the Canadian two star that allowed us then to proceed to the next step. I don't think any of this was ever in writing by the way. But I didn't care. [laughs]

The next thing we had to do was then go to the first SACLANT Infrastructure Conference, which took place in Portugal. There we were going to talk to the infrastructure people from all of those nations that were involved in SACLANT and some of the NATO Infrastructure people from Brussels.

As an aside, I believe that before this happened I had informally contacted some of the people I had worked with in NATO in Brussels in the infrastructure world to see whether

I was heading on the right track. I got support from the NATO Infrastructure section in Brussels on the basis that what we submitted was legitimate and fulfilled a NATO use. I did have that support.

Went down just to outside of Lisbon, I can't remember the exact locale, where we got involved and presented our case and so forth and so on. At a cocktail party I think the first or second evening, a United States Naval captain came up to me. Jack Wiebe would remember this. He said, "You will get infrastructure funding for projects in Canada over my dead body." I think he had a bit to drink but he was adamant that Canada was not in this game. [laughs] I can't remember his name and I don't care to. All I could say to him was, "We'll wait and see." [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: [laughs] Surprising, particularly since you were doing this in Portugal. The Portuguese who were getting funding as I recall for their antisubmarine airbases and their ports were viewed as different from Canada for doing precisely the same thing in the North Atlantic zone.

STEWART: But that's why I was doing it in the first place and this particular person said – I said to him, "Well, why don't you guys think about it?" That was like putting gasoline on the fire, so to speak, at which point we changed the conversation. He had absolutely no interest. He was absolutely contrary to the United States getting involved in anything like this. I think maybe since that time they have, but I'm not positive.

So anyway, having got acceptance or support at all of those levels, we then started putting in our first projects. If I remember correctly, the first two projects which we put in, and which we got funding for, was the DIAC [?] or a portion thereof in Greenwood and the Fleet Maintenance Unit in Halifax. I believe later we got some funding for the new SRU, and I believe later we got some funding for the Synchrolift. Since that time there's been a number of other projects, I'm sure. At Greenwood, I think there's a couple of new projects supporting the new aircraft that were covered.

Indeed, the program was launched. Jack Wiebe ran it until he retired. Then Dick Bohne took it over and ran it until he retired. I'm sure they could tell you much better than I could the number of millions we have, in fact, recovered. That we basically recovered.

INTERVIEWER: We got a lot of that money back when I was Director General Quartering. Principally because, although the money was entered into the NATO program, the way they set up their slices, stuff that we had long since finished was showing up cash-wise to the department, not to the construction budget but to the department.

STEWART: Yes...

INTERVIEWER: Many years after the fact...

STEWART: So the department got money back. The construction business never got the money back.

INTERVIEWER: No, it was understood that when a project went to the Program Control Board it was put forward for NATO funding. That helped them a little, I guess. Cause they never said no.

STEWART: But all in all, I think it was one of my, as a senior CE guy, one of my good accomplishments. It gained a lot of money for the country. I think it gained a lot more visibility for Halifax and Greenwood and the things that they do. So I think it was, in fact, it was a success and I hope it's still going. [laughs] I think, other than expending 99.6 percent of my allotted budget, was my main accomplishment of my two years as DCEC.

INTERVIEWER: John, now I'd like to move along now to some of the projects you were involved in both as Director General Quartering, and later as Chief of Construction Properties.

STEWART: I don't have that question. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Yes you do. Could we talk a little bit about number four?

STEWART: OK. Yes, yes...

INTERVIEWER: Could we talk a little bit, perhaps, about the Megastructure at St. Jean?

STEWART: We sure can. The structure, as you well know, was well under way by the time that I arrived as DGQ. So my involvement in the initial planning, development, so forth was really minimal. I had been minimally involved when I was DCEC, and then when I came back as DGQ. The thing was pretty well under way and getting near completion.

I do have some concerns about that particular project. First of all, I don't think it's a project that we can be particularly proud of in terms of keeping within the budget. There were many reasons that we didn't stay within the budget, but the fact of the matter is it was probably, in my experience, the most overrun project that we had ever had. As I say, that was for a variety of reasons. It wasn't one that I could go out and boast about because we had done so well.

Part of the problem came from the fact this was just being done post-Olympic stadium in Montreal. The construction climate was such, "Ask and you'll get." Basically, that same attitude came to the St. Jean project and you add that to the fact and the way the project was carried out with, I forget, how many contract packages. I think they were in the hundreds, which, in turn, because of this climate resulted in delay, claims and increases and so forth and so on. The timing to do it the way we did it was just not right, and it probably wasn't the right way anyway. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Was it a sequential design project?

STEWART: Yes, it was. It was a design-build type project and Freeman could tell you a hell of a lot more about this project than I could. It was a design-build project with each small package going out, then with the project office managing each small package. I think there was 268 packages or something like that. There was just too many contracts and contractors and conflicts and extras. It was bound to happen because of all those factors that I mentioned.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

STEWART: One follow on. I have spoken to many people who have actually used the building and they have all said – I've never had one say otherwise – it's just too much under one roof. To many things going on under one roof, and I think I have to agree with them.

INTERVIEWER: There were jokes at the time it was unhealthy. Because you could spend six months inside and you never had to step foot outdoors.

STEWART: That's exactly right and, I say, I've spoken to a number of people who have actually been occupiers of the facility. It's obviously not the traditional Army or Air Force base or Navy base. It's something different and maybe that contributed to the difficulties that people had.

INTERVIEWER: Let's move along to the next really big project and probably the biggest the department had been involved in to that point, and perhaps since, even. The Ship Repair Unit Atlantic.

STEWART: That was a wonderful project. Once again, I was involved with it both as DGQ and then later as CCP. It was a design-build, but it wasn't a design-build with [laughs] 200 and some odd packages. There was a very limited amount of packages. There was very tight control put on it by our major consultant, and I can't remember their name.

INTERVIEWER: Whitman Benn

STEWART: Whitman Benn, who in fact controlled the design and, indeed, controlled the schedule. The DCL had a major role in their normal quality control and contracting procedures and so forth. There was a nice tight control right from the start that I could see from both my vantage point as DGQ and then as CCP. I was the chairman of the – what did they used to call it – the review board or something like that?

INTERVIEWER: Senior Review Board.

STEWART: Senior Review Board. Therefore, I got down there frequently to monitor, if you will. I think the proof of the pudding is really, first of all, the Navy got a first class

facility, just a first class facility. Secondly, it came in, I think, seven months or six months ahead of schedule. Thirdly, it was one million under budget. [laughs] You can't complain about that. It was indeed, I think, a very successful project, but once again I would mention two people who could really talk to you about that. Freeman once again but Cy Allen who was the first project manager and his replacement. I am sitting here trying to think of it.

INTERVIEWER: Ed Hare.

STEWART: Ed Hare was the other one. A good project, and one that I think we can be very proud of. And one, interestedly enough, and I don't know who arranged but the colours are the engineer colours on the outside of the building [laughs].

INTERVIEWER: I wonder who? [laughs]

STEWART: I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: There were a lot of engineers in charge.

STEWART: That and that whole program; The Fleet Maintenance Unit, the Synchronlift. Those are the three that come to mind immediately. They were all good projects and I think we can be quite proud of them. It was in that environment – and I am jumping ahead a little bit – it was that environment that when I was CCP the auditor general did a definitive audit of the department. In her report she gave rare praise to the Construction-Engineering program.

INTERVIEWER: It didn't really help because the department came back after us the next year saying you can't live on that. Just a question, John. Its been said that much of the success of the Ship Repair Unit Atlantic project was based on the fact that a separate project management office was established outside of Ottawa, away from the day-to-day control of Director General of Construction. Comment?

STEWART: Well, the only comment I can make is the St. Jean project had the same thing, too. In fact, I think a bigger office. The project office in Halifax was a very limited number of people. I'm trying to remember, maybe three or something like that. The fact was is that they were there and they were dealing on a daily basis with Whitman Benn and on a daily basis with DCL. Therefore there was cohesion at the coalface.

INTERVIEWER: From my perspective as command engineer at that time, one of the great joys was, yes, you could talk to these guys. They were there and, more importantly, I had a man on their staff, an officer who kept us honest in the Navy and kept the constructors honest. It was a very important position in that job.

STEWART: Who was that?

INTERVIEWER: That was a position called the senior staff officer dockyard development.

STEWART: OK. Yes, yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: In my time it was Ron Richards, Commander Ron Richards.

STEWART: No, it makes just good sense that if you've got a project going like that, you want to have the control where the project is. We did and we had good people. You can't separate those two.

INTERVIEWER: I said in an earlier interview that you probably had, as the project manager initially, the only officer in the branch at the time who had the engineering smarts and the straight bloody meanness to make it all come together. I had said that to a number of people over the years and I've never had a disagreement. That Cy was a tough little guy and brooked nonsense not at all. He had all the engineering wherewithal to make it happen.

STEWART: You couldn't have said it better. In fact, if I remember correctly, I had a hand in having him appointment to that job. My memory might be wrong, but I think I did. I know that would have been one of the reasons cause he had worked for me when I was DCOS MILE in Winnipeg. This guy is just like a little...

INTERVIEWER: He's a Terrier.

STEWART: Terrier.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

STEWART: He didn't take BS from anybody. [laughs] I liked him and he deserves probably as much or more than any other single person for the credit for that project.

INTERVIEWER: I'm going to throw in a question that's not on there, just for the heck of it, on projects. Because I'm not sure what your direct involvement was in the North Warning System and the project management, North American air defence modernization.

STEWART: Very limited. I think I had a hand in appointing the project leader on that one but I'm not really able to talk too much about it.

INTERVIEWER: OK...

STEWART: Other than the fact, if I remember correctly, insisting the construction people, our world, were in the equation. Cause at one point they were going to give the whole thing, I think, again I am going back from memory. One point there was a thought, "You guys don't have to be involved. We can let the Americans do the whole thing." My

attitude was, “ Look this on our territory. This is our responsibility, therefore, yes, we must be involved.”

INTERVIEWER: Not only did we take it on. One Construction Engineering Unit did an awful lot of both of the engineering work and the supervision of contractors on the short-range program.

STEWART: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So it was another big engineer success. Had the communicators been left to their own devices I think there was no question they would have contracted the whole thing out.

STEWART: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: and run into no end of problems.

STEWART: Right.

INTERVIEWER: One of the things starting to assume increasing importance during your tenure, I guess, really, as Chief of Construction Properties was the environment. How did this evolve from your perspective and what impact did it have on cost and project delivery times?

STEWART: I can't really say too much in this area because it was just happening as I was leaving. There was a cell, or Directorate. It might have been ADM (POL) who was worried about nuclear contamination and the NBC stuff. It was decided that it should be joined with the environmental assessment and the environmental impact and so forth and so on. A decision was made, and I can't recall who made it or how it was made that particular – it was actually an individual, if I recall, would move down and come and work in the CCP organization in an environment unit. This, as I remember, in fact, then dictated that we form an environmental section.

So we formed – I don't remember the exact name – the Directorate of Environmental something or other. I negotiated with Tony Downs to retire from the military and become the first director of that particular organization. In terms of any projects that I was involved with before I left in 86, I saw no significant, significant, impact on cost or time for projects that were ongoing at the time. I'm sure that happened later and I don't know to what extent, but the obvious person to talk to is Tony Downs. He took that from – he was the first director. He then became the Director General and to the point that he was finally reporting directly to ADM, whatever they –I&E or whatever they call them now.

INTERVIEWER: That was the evolution of the old Chief of Construction Properties office civilianized

STEWART: Yes, he really took that thing right from its inception and then, of course, you know the many things they got involved in, investigations up North and all this stuff. Other than indirect contact, I really can't say much other than the fact, yes, we formed it and we picked the right guy to go in and do it and he did it.

INTERVIEWER: Yes and I went to your successor and I said, "I can't handle any more of these Ministerial Inquiry files to which I can add nothing. Why don't you make Tony a Director General and have him report direct to you?" He agreed.

STEWART: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: [laughs] That's how it happened.

STEWART: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: John, I'd like to move on to your time as commandant of RMC, because it was destined you were to live in interesting times.

STEWART: [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: You were the first commandant when the ladies were introduced to the college.

STEWART: Indeed, I was. Indeed, I was. The tour as commandant at RMC was probably if not the highlight was one of the highlights of my career. It was just a fantastic job and it was a fantastic time to be there.

The introduction of female cadets to the Military colleges probably was overdue. There were many dinosaurs within the old, old boys who thought that Barney Danson had shafted them. There were many, for many, many years after still deplored the fact. There might still be one or two but the rest are the converted if they didn't agree already.

As the commandant arriving to RMC to welcome these 32 young ladies – there was 32 in the first class – I certainly had a very positive attitude. I really did. I recognized that the women were playing more and more roles within the Canadian Forces and, in fact, by that time I think submarines were the only one they were precluded from joining. There was no doubt if they were going to be officers in the Canadian Forces they should go to the school that teaches you how to be an officer and gives you an education at the same time. There was no hesitation. No doubt. No misgivings on my part about being the commandant at RMC to welcome these young ladies.

I can't speak highly enough of them. They were 32 young ladies from a cross section of Canadian society who came to the college with a lot of apprehension obviously. But came by and large with a desire to not only to do as well as the men, but probably to do better. [laughs] It was a just delight for me to get to know most of them and see how they persevered and in most cases succeeded.

There were problems that occurred, obviously. But one of the things that we did was we established a committee called the Minerva Committee which was there to keep close control and monitoring of the program [and] to provide advice to me. And to also to be a method whereby the women themselves could have input, and the men, too.

Within that committee we had a Captain Berthiaume who, in fact, was the 'ombuswoman' for the 32 ladies. They were allowed direct access to her even though she wasn't— except for one squadron – their squadron commander. Many were adverse to doing that because they felt they weren't playing the game, if you will. But she was invaluable in terms of suggestions and counselling and that type of thing. Of course, I had to rely on her to a great extent. There were two ladies on that committee. As I remember correctly, Valerie Keys who later became Valerie Spenser. I think she also assisted on that Minerva Committee.

The two greatest problems that we had were, first of all, excessive media attention. You name it and they were there asking about it, looking into it. In order to help ease that burden, we arranged for one major media day where we had the girls there and a whole bunch of the media there. I can recall there was one particular reporter whose only aim was for have somebody to admit that hanky panky going on and I didn't have much [?] shrift for him quite frankly. The media day went extremely well and I think took some pressure off the girls, except it had an impact on the males in that all these other people getting all the attention and nobody was paying attention to them. That had its adverse effects, nothing of significance but, nevertheless, it wasn't pleasant at times in that regard.

Of course, there was a male attitude that existed among many that the girls shouldn't be there in the first place. That had to be managed as best we could. The biggest single problem in that regard was some immature males that we had who not only thought that, but they could make things difficult for some of the girls. We had a major incident of harassment in one of the squadrons. We had Captain Berthiaume investigate it and determine the causes. Resulting from that, I made sexual harassment an offense punishable by release.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Major General retired J. A. Stewart, end of side one.

END OF SIDE ONE

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program interview with Major General retired J.A. Stewart. Tape one side two.

STEWART: But aside from that, and in my opinion and many others, it was a very successful year. We had some interesting events that took place but I must preface [?] by saying our aim was equal treatment for everybody. Now, mind you, there had to be some minor differences in the physical education program. No easier but different in some ways. We had to adjust the diets to reflect different requirements. We also had to have

bathing suits rather than shorts. In fact, the first bathing suits we got, the Speedos, one was modelled by the director of cadets, John Annand's wife. She got in the shower and it went transparent so we had to order new bathing suits. Oh, and things like the type of supplies that we had to have in the canteen that we never thought we would have to have. These were interesting things but, by and large, the young ladies performed just exceedingly well. Just exceedingly well. I think one of them has reached the rank of full colonel. I can't remember her name.

I'll just go for one second. One incident that really affected me personally; it was the day of the obstacle race. I was at the finish line to greet people as they came through and the girls, of course. This one bedraggled-looking girl came up to me and stood at attention and said, "May I say something to you, sir?" with kind of a glint in her eye. I said, "Certainly go ahead." She said, "You know your button's upside down." [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: [Laughs]

STEWART: Her name was Marie Pierre Cloutier. I've been in touch with her on and off. I haven't talked with her for a number of years. She came back later as a squadron commander. She married a fellow cadet who was killed in an airplane crash. Then she remarried again. I think her name now is Clark. She was –it epitomized the spunk of these young ladies and I was so taken with that. Bottom line, now I look at it some 20 years later, it's no longer an event.

Oh, the other thing I should mention, it's because of the attitude that I saw amongst some of the males and it seemed in particular from those who were coming from Royal Roads. I made the strong recommendation that Royal Roads go co-ed sooner than later so that the cadets coming from Roads had already experienced this and that happened.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't have any particularly problem from the kids from CMR?

STEWART: No, they went the same time.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, OK.

STEWART: They went the same time.

INTERVIEWER: When you returned to NDHQ as Chief of Construction Properties, you were the Canadian Military Engineer Branch Co-Advisor with then Director General Military Engineer Operations, I think it was called at that time.

STEWART: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How did you discharge these split responsibilities, or these dual responsibilities, and what were some of the issues dealt with?

STEWART: The one thing that we did, and I'm sure it's no longer done, between DGMEO and myself we made recommendations for career patterns for lieutenant colonels and above. I suppose I was the lead authority in that regard. For all intents and purposes, we were reasonably successful in placing people where we thought they should go. It certainly was a joint effort in terms of DGMEO and myself because we were covering both the Army side, if you will, and the Air Force side at that time. I wasn't as qualified to talk about where, perhaps, somebody had spent time in the Army might want to go next, whether into an air job or not. That was one of things we did do. I don't think the Branch advisors today have any say in postings in careers. He might, but I don't think so. I thought it was very useful because we got some of the right people in the right jobs. That, I think was good.

One of the things that we tried to do, and I perhaps more than my other co-advisor because I was of higher rank, was to lobby with the senior Army officers to get a combat arms status restored to the people who were doing combat engineering. I did get support from Belzile and I think, in fact, it was between Belzile and then subsequently Gord Reay that a decision was made to do this. I think that decision was made easier, however, because we had gone into two uniforms.

INTERVIEWER: How much...

STEWART: Another thing, as the Branch co-advisors we did discuss trade questions and groupings and so forth. Put our input into various committees that dealt with that sort of thing. I guess between the two of us, unity was one of our main roles, tasks. Keeping the Branch together.

INTERVIEWER: I recall at the time we went to great lengths to preach that, and then two or three years later, we had to turn around and say we didn't really mean that when the officer classification broke down. We can talk about that a little more...

STEWART: Well, we will because I think you really did mean it...

INTERVIEWER: We did mean it.

STEWART: It's still meant but in a different way perhaps. But I'll ...

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to, just before we get to that one, just probe a little bit more. At the time, my impression was there wasn't a great deal of, shall we say Blue, Green prejudice going on at that time. We had officers in blue uniforms serving as base engineers on Army bases and vice versa. There didn't seem to be any kind of hang ups there.

STEWART: No, there were some by individuals. I won't name names.

INTERVIEWER: There was some. I recall distinctly of one particular officer, who will remain nameless, when posted as BCEO at Gagetown was told, “We don’t want this damned Air Force guy here.” Then about six month later they were singing the praises.

STEWART: [Laughs]

INTERVIEWER: You win some, you lose some, I guess.

STEWART: Generally speaking, my impression while I was CCP and Branch advisor was we were a pretty good family. There was, as in any family, differences and difficulties, but as a group I thought we were doing very well. When I come to Colonel Commandant [name?] I’ll say I think we still are but that’s coming later.

INTERVIEWER: One of the things you got as senior serving Military Engineer, you ended up on the Uniform Committee in 1984.

STEWART: Yes. 84 or 85?

INTERVIEWER: Well, I think it 80 ...I’m not sure.

STEWART: 85. I think it was 85.

INTERVIEWER: What was the Military Engineer position going into that sort of era?

STEWART: OK. First of all, I was not part of the committee as the senior serving Engineer. I was there representing the technical branches: LORE, CELE or whatever it’s called, MARE, AERE and MILE. That’s why I had been selected, from the technical point of view, not from the Engineering point of view. Having said that, AERE was not going to be a problem anyway. They were all going to go into blue. MARE was not going to be a problem because they were all going to go into blue. LORE, there was some desire to have two uniforms but no great – or three uniforms but no great lobbying, if you will. And they were smaller than anybody else. I’m not really sure, having been there, I’m still not really sure how they ended up in one uniform. Other than the fact that someone said, “It’s simpler.”

MILE, however, was a major consideration. Unity for the MILE branch because of its size and because of its diversification was hard enough in one uniform. In two uniforms, it was going to be, perhaps, next to impossible. History would tell. The Branch council, I went to Branch council and I said, “I intend to lobby for one uniform but I won’t do that unless you agree.” Branch council agreed to one uniform and that one uniform would be the Army uniform. So that was my position with the Uniform Committee. A lot of that, of course, as I’ve already alluded to, was about unity.

The Air Force disagreed. I received a personal phone call from the then commander of air command, a personal friend, Paul Manson, who could not understand why I, as a former

Air Force, RCAF officer/pilot and all that good stuff, could possibly be saying, “One uniform only and it’s Army.”

My attitude to him was, “Look you’ve never served in one of these support branches. You don’t know that we’re not really treated the same as the pilots and the navigators.”

He said, “Oh yes you are.”

I said, “Come on, Paul. I lived it you haven’t. I’ve accepted it. But it’s a fact.”

We discussed it on the phone and I could not change his mind. His representative at the committee was – oh, two star; he became commander of air command a little later. Lives up in Perth. Shoot. It doesn’t matter now. His representative, of course, therefore has to echo his boss’ position. The chairman of the committee who was Jack Vance and, by the way, a classmate of Paul Manson [laughs] agreed with Paul. Agreed with General Mason. The Navy didn’t give a damn either way. LORE were – not LORE, sorry, the other person there was the Logistics representative and he was tending to side with the Air Force. So, actually, I became a voice of one in that committee. The recommendation went to the Chief of Defence Staff, majority recommendation, that we be in two uniforms and the minority recommendation saying one. And, of course, the CDS accepted the majority recommendation and we ended up in two uniforms.

INTERVIEWER: At the time this was done, the works and bricks side of the Branch, if you will, on the air side was seen as being something deployed in static locations as I recall. There was no Air Force requirement for deployed engineer support.

STEWART: I would say that’s about 95 percent true. Not 100 percent because there was a couple of small deployments, and I can’t remember where they were. Generally speaking, that was true.

INTERVIEWER: I think it was somewhat after that that the Air Force came up with the concept of a two-squadron bed down in north Norway that definitely required engineer support.

STEWART: Yes and then the remote airfields up in the North. Then we went from there to bigger and better things. At that particular time, I would say the blue was works and bricks, basically. Of course, the firefighters are a whole other game but they served in all three services...

INTERVIEWER: Well, certainly, in most of their modes they are fully operationally troops.

STEWART: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Whether they’re on an airfield, on the back deck of a ship.

STEWART: Exactly, exactly.

So, anyway, I predicted increasing divisiveness and, at least for a while and maybe still, I was correct. [talkover?]

INTERVIEWER: It was funny at times because some officers were asked on different postings to change uniforms. In the early days, they were allowed to do that. Eventually, some people felt they were on the wrong side of the fence and offered to jump back because they viewed promotion to be better on one side rather than the other. Eventually, it was stopped. You're painted that color, you're going to stay that way.

STEWART: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: That pretty much moves us along to your tenure as Colonel Commandant, and I think you were in the chair when, essentially, the one branch two uniforms approach started to break down a little bit.

STEWART: Yes and no. We'll just leave the firefighters out of it because – they were now two distinct parts. There was the Air Force part and there was the Army part. I think this was inevitable for two reasons. First of all, because we were now in two uniforms and, secondly, because in fact combat arms status was restored to the Army. Quite frankly, I don't think restoring the combat arms status to the Army in itself hurt divisiveness, it just recognized a fact of life that the Army were on the combat team, period. Because that happened, then you had to have the two trade structures if you will.

We had then, what did you call them, the airfield engineers and the combat engineers. That, in fact, I think regularized an existing situation but it also promoted the development of something else within the Air Force side. If the Air Force side was going to be works and bricks and nothing else, we would have had contractors out there by now. But deployments to various foreign countries, the Air Force realizing when they went somewhere they had to have something, all of these contributed to giving an operational role, if you will, to the Air Force engineer. If that had not had happened, we would not have a blue engineer now. If we did, it would be so few and far between. So, in fact, in a sense the Army development as now combat engineers contributed to, I think, maybe indirectly to a development of the Air Force engineer into an operational – an engineer force with an operational capability.

So now have this group who traditionally from a 100 years ago are doing what they've always done. We've now got a newer group that are now starting to do things that are operational in nature. To me, Dave, this in fact then engendered mutual respect amongst the family. I believe, yes, we have two distinct parts of the family but I really think we have an esprit de corps and brotherhood of one family.

This is all – and I think – so in a way what I am saying is that the combat arms thing, that should have happened years ago. It happened, but at a time when the uniforms thing was still fairly current and now we end up with two distinct organizations. But then, with the

development of the parallel development of this other one over here, we now have, “ Heh, you’re a good guy, yes, you’re a good guy.” So we all yell Chimo when were at a function.

INTERVIEWER: I’d like to move on in your tenure as Colonel Commandant; ask you what sort of feedback were you getting on the split, if you will, into airfield engineers and combat engineers from the one size fits all.

STEWART: I’ve already commented that while as Colonel Commandant some of these very interesting things had happened or were happening. Such as the uniforms and the combat arms status. You’ve probably gathered that I’m not unhappy with the way those things have developed because I think they were inevitable if in fact, particularly if in fact, the combat engineer was going to be given the recognition that has been always there and that the combat engineer deserves.

I travelled very extensively as Colonel Commandant. I think I visited every base in Canada. I visited Haiti twice. I visited Bosnia. I visited Croatia twice. I think maybe in the three years that I was Colonel Commandant I made somewhere around 75 trips. I might be exaggerating a bit but not that much. Every place I went we used to have a town house session whereby I would get together with the officers. I would get together with the other ranks. Very seldom the two groups together. I did that everywhere I went. There were a lot of individual beefs about the various things that soldiers and airmen beef about. I always told them, I can’t change it but I can tell your problems to the people who possible can change it. I couldn’t do anything more than that.

I don’t recall in the three years I was Colonel Commandant that I ever heard anything of any significance concerning the differences between the Army and the Air Force. I really didn’t. I was in places that both were deployed. Both worked together harmoniously. I didn’t hear, really, anybody have any major concerns about two uniforms. Didn’t like it. But [indistinct?] why it happened. So, I got to say that in the three years I was there, I really didn’t sense any significant antagonism between the two sides. The Air Force had adopted by that time a motto, “ If you’re not deployable, you’re not employable.” That certainly was the motto, for example, at Air Command in Winnipeg which, again, is a good thing.

So the bottom-line being that when I finished my tour as Colonel Commandant, I was relatively comfortable about the sense – about the Branch in general as a family. Not necessarily two electricians, but maybe a carpenter and maybe an electrician, if you follow what I’m saying. So, I don’t know. Obviously things have evolved and maybe there’s been some hardening of positions here and there. [In] 97, I wasn’t particularly uncomfortable about where we stood.

INTERVIEWER: The only hardening I’ve seen in the last two or three years – I’m getting some feedback from Colonel Commandants – is at a very junior level. In fact, the senior hierarchy of the Branch is all pulling in the same direction.

STEWART: I agree, and what I did see where people were complaining, they were individual complaints about, “ Well this happened to me.” Yes, it happened to that person but it didn’t give me the sense that it was a wide spread situation. I can’t recall anything – specific items.

But some interesting one, I was in Comox having my town house session with the other ranks. This corporal put his hand up, and I don’t remember what his problem was, but he had a problem. I took it back. About a year later I was Haiti and I’m doing a town house up in some god-forsaken place in Haiti, this corporal sticks his hand up and he says, “ What did you do about that question that I had asked?” [laughs]

All I could say, “Well, I took it to Ottawa.” It was the same questions. Anyway...

INTERVIEWER: Well, that’s all the formal questions I had John. Was there anything you’d like to add?

STEWART: No I think that’s fine.

INTERVIEWER: Well thank you very much.

STEWART: You’re very welcome.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Major General retired J.A. Stewart on 14 December, 2005 interview ends.

TRANSCRIPT ENDS