CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW CONTROL NUMBER : 31D 5 HUMPHREYS

INTERVIEW EE: Anthony (Tony) P. Humphreys

INTERVIEWER: Angus Brown

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 9 December 2004

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Ottawa, ON

TRANSCRIBED BY: S. Johnston

Transcription of Interview Number 31D 5 HUMPHREYS

Anthony (Tony) P. Humphreys

Interviewed on 9 December 2004

By Angus Brown

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program. Interview with Tony Humphreys recorded on 9 December 2004 at Ottawa, Ontario. Interviewed by Angus Brown. Tape One, Side One.

Tony, can you just confirm that we both signed the legal release?

HUMPHREYS: Yes, we have, Angus.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me when and where you were born and spell your last name please?

HUMPHREYS: I was born in 1947 in Lornhorn, Germany. My name is Tony Humphreys, spelled H-U-M-P-H-R-E-Y-S.

INTERVIEWER: Tony, I wonder if you could give me just a quick outline of your life to date?

HUMPHREYS: I was born in Germany in 1947. My father was with the occupation forces, British forces, in northern Germany. We came to Canada in 1952. In 1953, my dad joined the air force and we were posted back to Metz, France, in 1954. We were there until 1958. My dad was posted to RCAF Station Centralia, Ontario. We were there until 1960, at which point we were posted back to Metz, France again so that he could carry on with the Special Investigation Unit. I was there until 1964. I graduated from high school, went directly to the Royal Military College in Kingston. [I] was there for four years and finished with a degree in chemical engineering. Became an aerospace engineering officer which I did for 35 – 36 years and retired in 1999 from the Reg force. Did one more year as a Class C reservist, retiring in 2000. Since then I have been a public servant with DND.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about how you found out about going to Europe from your parents?

HUMPHREYS: I don't really have a great recollection of that, Angus. We had only been in Toronto for a couple of years. My dad during that period had joined the air force and it seemed like just a few months later we were going over to Europe again. So I was going back to a place I was familiar with, in a sense, but I don't really recall how he broached the subject.

INTERVIEWER: What was the feeling in your family at the time? Were you happy, unhappy?

HUMPHREYS: I really, again, can't remember what my emotions were. The first time we went

over in 1954, I was in Grade 3 and I was no doubt unhappy. We'd moved to the New World from Germany. There'd been a lot of upheaval and now it seemed like we'd be moving again. But I don't really recall having an indelible memory of being unhappy or upset. The second time I went over in 1960, I was in the middle of Grade 9. It was probably more difficult. I had established myself in the Centralia area. I went to high school in Exeter. It was probably more difficult but I knew I was going back to a place I had left only a year and a half earlier so there were still friends who had remained there and I would be reunited with. Having moved around with my own kids, as a member of the air force, I image that, generally speaking, I was probably unhappy.

INTERVIEWER: When you were told the second time that you were going to go back in the '60s, were you happy to be going back to the Metz area that you knew?

HUMPHREYS: Yes. I think the idea of familiar turf, friends that I had been in class with up to Grade 7 who would still be there because I had moved in the middle of Grade 9. So I was going to see my old friends. That really eased the transition. It was not a giant unknown for me.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the trip over both times.

HUMPHREYS: They were quite different. The first time was in 1954 and it was on a ship called the ATLANTIC. Coincidently, it was the same ship that I had come over on as an immigrant just two years earlier. Of course, when I came over as an immigrant, I was in the bowels of the ship, kind of like the TITANIC in steerage, and now we were a few decks higher and it was far more comfortable. The memories I have are typical memories of being on board ship: the games, the size of the ship, which probably wasn't large by today's standards. But the memories are good memories. The gym, the lifeboat drill, going to the theatre, etc. The second time I went over again was in 1960 when I was in Grade 9. By then, people were flying over. But it was prior to the Yukon days and I actually went over on a deHavilland Comet. We left from Uplands and I recall we had to stop, I believe it was in Goose Bay, to refuel before going over. But that was my one and only trip on a Comet and we landed in Marville. Again, quite a different experience.

INTERVIEWER: Now in 1954 when your father was first posted to Metz, were dependents being allowed to go?

HUMPHREYS: Yes. They were being allowed to go. In our case there was no place to live so we had a problem with accommodation. That seemed to be, in Metz, the biggest challenge. Metz was a city that had seen a lot of warfare. There were no PMQs. There was very little accommodation. Metz was gearing up, the headquarters. I recall that when we did go over, my dad was working Saturday mornings as well, like a five-and-a-half-day job as opposed to what's now a five-day job. When we had our recent Metz reunion, I talked to people who had been there in about 1952 who had been there as part of the base activation period. In those days, not only was there no PMQs or that kind of infrastructure, but the kids actually were taught through correspondence courses.

INTERVIEWER: So what did your family do for accommodation?

HUMPHREYS: We went over in'54 and because there was no accommodation in Metz, my dad carried on and went to Metz. My mother and I, because we were a small family -- I'm an only child -- we went and stayed with relatives, an elderly aunt in England at West Cliff-on-Sea. I ended up going for a few weeks to a school, St. Mary's Prittlewell. We were there for a while. Eventually my father secured accommodation in Mondorf-les-Bains which was just across the border in Luxembourg. It wasn't even in France. It was in Luxembourg. There were several Canadian families that lived in this small town. The fathers would commute daily with the older children and they would attend school in Metz.

INTERVIEWER: Commuted with cars?

HUMPHREYS: They commuted with cars. So they would carpool and drive back and forth. It was about an hour's drive.

INTERVIEWER: So you had to, every day, go across the border?

HUMPHREYS: I did. We who were the young kids, we did not go into Metz. We stayed there and every day crossed the border -- an actual border crossing point with guards, etc. -- crossed into France and attended a one-room school. It was an interesting experience because, first of all, there were the pure Anglophone students who knew no French. Fortunately, for some of the students, they were Francophone Canadians. So they were able to cope and they helped we Anglophones out.

But generally speaking, in this one-roomed school, which would be like a typical Canadian one-room school of the day, we Anglophones, we were just given things to copy out of a book. We would just blindly copy them out onto our slates. We had the two things we wrote on. We all had a slate and a slate pencil. Occasionally, we were allowed to actually write on real paper, using a nib-pen, one of the old style where you had to change the nib as it wore out. The teacher would trust us with some ink poured out of a large bottle into the ink well on our individual desks. I recall one day I spilled the ink in my ink well. It went all over my paper. The teacher, who was like a caricature from an old French movie with a long smock and a cane, he wacked my desk with this cane. He yelled at me for spilling this ink. I had no idea what he was talking about but I did get the impression he was angry.

INTERVIEWER: The school was run by the French authorities then?

HUMPHREYS: It was. This was again -- above the school was the living quarters for the teacher and his family. So, if one of his children was ill, there was no school that day because we might disturb this child from its sleep. There was an outhouse out in the back.

Another memory I have of the school is one day, it was time for a biology class. I can tell you about our accommodations there. We all dutifully filed outside, it was the middle of winter, and there, before our eyes, out in the snow, was a freshly-killed pig which was carved open. The instructor solemnly reached in and pulled out various organs and other innards and held them aloft and described to us what they were. To this day I have a distinct feeling to being unwell, and I'll never forget that because this was totally foreign to our experience.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the accommodation that you had.

HUMPHREYS: After school, we would go back to our homes which were typical Europe: little cobblestone streets, very narrow streets. We lived above a butcher shop. We just had a couple of rooms. The butcher shop had its own abattoir. So they did their own butchering on the ground level, sort of this part of the butcher shop that looked like a garage. A much larger garage. So when I took the garbage out, I had to walk through this garage, which was the abattoir. There were always live pigs squealing, running around. They had kind of figured out that this was not the best place to be and that their days were numbered. It stunk to high heaven of these poor pigs and there was a long bar along one wall where they would actually hang the dead cattle, cows, and cut them open and butcher them right there. For a young Canadian kid who was probably more urban than rural, this was quite an exposure to a way of life that I'd never contemplated or had exposure to before.

INTERVIEWER: Tony, did you know much about the political situation either time that you went to Europe?

HUMPHREYS: Not really, Angus. The first time, definitely not. This was a move. I don't think I associated it with Cold War or politics. The second time, again, was 1960. I was in Grade 9. I would have been more aware of the geopolitical situation. I knew that the Russians were the bad guys. The East Germans were bad. The "Commies" -- there was a commie under ever rock. I'm sure I had some inkling of that, of why we were going over. But I don't remember it as a really great awareness or having any fear or trepidation or other associated negative or that type of emotion.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any outstanding first impressions either time that you arrived in Europe?

HUMPHREYS: Again, one thing that might be different from my experiences is that I was a recent immigrant myself and had just come from Germany having spent the first five years of my life there. It wasn't a terrific culture shock to travel to Europe and be exposed to something that was radically different from what I had seen. I do recall the first time in '54 – '55 there was a lot of destruction, damage from the war. Rebuilding had commenced in some locations but not in others. The building I lived in – the house, when we eventually did move to Metz from Mondorf –the house we lived in was pock-marked with shrapnel. Number 43 rue des Papiniere, I'll never forget it. But when you looked at a house that you lived in that had signs of surviving the war, you really were always conscious that this was different from North America. The second time I went over, again it would have been much the same. By then, I had been there. I was more used to European culture. I had done a lot of travelling with my parents. It was almost like putting on an old sweater. I could kind of slip right into it.

INTERVIEWER: You described Mondorf accommodation very well. You then said that you moved to Metz?

HUMPHREYS: Yeah, we moved to Metz. My father finally managed to secure accommodation

in Metz on an island, Ile sans se Forien [?]. We lived there from ’54 to ’58. It seemed to be a place where Canadians lived and Americans. My friends on the street, my playmates if you will, were Canadian and American. I described the house. We actually rented the upstairs of what today, in Canadian terms, would be a two-story house – just a regular two-story house. The differences, we were in the top floor and the toilet was downstairs. We had one bedroom plus a bedroom/living room. In the kitchen we had a coal stove. So we cooked using coal. We had no refrigerator. We had the bathtub in the kitchen. At the time, of course, I was young and this was all I knew. This was the norm. Later, of course, I realized that there were different standards.

One thing I will describe about our accommodation on rue des Papiniere, on this island in Metz, was a day in the spring. I forget exactly which year. The Voges Mountains, which are the closest to that area, the snow melted in the spring and, of course, the Moselle River that flows through Metz, the water level rose. We were told that it was getting critical and that we could expect some flooding. In fact, the entire island flooded. I have a vivid recollection of standing on my street, seeing the flood waters just rippling toward our street and the houses. The entire lower floor and basement, the basement being where the coal furnace and what not were, totally flooded with water. Finally the American Army that was in Metz, they had to come in with amphibious vehicles and evacuate people. They had to take them away. So, great adventure for a young guy.

The second time we were in Metz, we lived on a street that was more in town called rue Franchette Desparee. It was in an area where there had been quite palatial homes. The house that we lived in, we were on the ground floor and it had been converted into three apartments. The owner lived on one floor and her son and his family lived on another floor. The landlady, she in fact spoke German because she was from that era when Metz was back and forth, German-French, German-French. My father, being a fluent German speaker, and my mom could speak German, they were able to converse with her. In the attic, there was an au-pair girl that worked for the landlady’s son and his family. I recall one day – she was young, seventeen, eighteen – and she had a very minor accident on her moped and broke her leg. Nobody seemed too concerned. But a few weeks later, she ended up with gangrene in the leg and died. A reminder that health care was a bit riskier than nowadays or even then in Canada. That was a very nice house that we lived in. I did have one French friend that lived on the street, a guy named Jo-jo. Strange name but he was always out to impress me. Again ,it was nice to have somebody on the street who I could converse with and learn a bit about the local area and the culture and what not.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever live in married quarters?

HUMPHREYS: We never lived in married quarters in Metz, because my parents and myself were quite European. My parents were cosmopolitan, I would describe them as that. We were very comfortable on the economy. We never felt the need to live in married quarters. But that was where a lot of my friends were and that was very much a focal point of getting together with your chums. Later as we became attracted to women, to teenage girls, that was where your hormones took you. We never did live in PMQs.

INTERVIEWER: Could you just briefly describe some of the married quarters that you visited in Metz?

HUMPHREYS: The married quarters there were two long blocks. A 'block' was where the NCOs lived. I believe there were ten to fourteen entrances. It's just one gigantic apartment block. Each entrance was sort of a three-story walk-up. You would have about six homes, apartments, in each one. Then just around the corner, down the street, was the officer block and there were six individual units, the same configuration in each. I'm not sure if they were all four-bedroom but certainly all three- and four-bedroom. They were pretty cramped. The furniture was, of course, provided. You saw the same furniture, it didn't matter who you visited. The other place that would be considered married quarters was within walking distance. It was called the 'Villas' and was a small enclave of senior officer quarters where the Air Officer Commanding, the air vice-marshal, the air commodore and the group captains lived. So there were a number of those.

INTERVIEWER: Where were these married quarters located in Metz?

HUMPHREYS: They were downtown, nowhere near the base. They were adjacent to an old fort, Fort Bellequois[?]. The kids that lived there were constantly reminded of the area. Incidentally, Metz is the most heavily fortified city in Europe. There were constant reminders. If you walked 100 yards away from your PMQ, you were on a rampart, you were in a moat, you were in a bunker. There was no avoiding it. You were always reminded of the rich history of that whole area.

INTERVIEWER: Now, the second time you went to a Canadian school, I understand. Is that correct?

HUMPHREYS: Yes. I went to a Canadian school when we moved from Mondorf to this rue des Papiniere in Metz. I had left Canada in Grade 3. I left in October 1954. From then until May '55, I had had essentially no schooling. I had a little bit of schooling in Westcliffe in England and nothing except the innards of a pig in this school in France. When we arrived in Metz in about May 1955, there was a school that had been established. It was in an old hotel, a disused hotel, called the Capris Hotel.

INTERVIEWER: This was a school for Canadians?

HUMPHREYS: This was a school for Canadians but the classrooms were the size of old hotel rooms. So they were very small, very cramped. By the time I got there, there was physically no room for me in Grade 3. In those days things were pretty lax, so I was placed in Grade 4 thereby gaining a year. I ended up skipping a year and ended up, really, missing all of Grade 3 and all of Grade 4, all in the same year. So when I started Grade 5, a lot of the skills that I should have learned…. I couldn't write. I couldn't do long division. It was a bit of a challenge. That was only for that year.

By the next year, the school was in the, what became, the sort of focal point for schooling for Canadian students overseas. It was a fairly modern building, near the PMQs within walking distance, probably a ten-minute walk. In 1956 it became the General Navereau School. I recall sitting outside on chairs while the Air Vice Marshal and General Navereau himself were there for the official opening of the school. I was in that school for Grade 5. Incidentally for part of

Grade 5, while they were building that school and getting it ready, the first part of Grade 5, I was actually up at the base. But that was a short period. We were moved down to this location.

As well as the main General Navereau School modern building, there was also a wooden structure just adjacent to it. The high school kids were in there and I was in it for Grades 6 and 7. That was my first tour. When I came back in 1960, I was in the middle of Grade 9. I was still in that wooden structure down by the main dependents school. By Grade 10, the high school was moved up to the base. We were in a one-storey H-hut. That's where I ended up. I was there from Grade 10 through to Grade 13.

INTERVIEWER: Who was General Navereau?

HUMPHREYS: He was a very old general. I believe he was in his late fifties at the time. I believe he was military governor of Metz. I never really thought about it at the time, or understood what his role was, but I think his role at that point would have been fairly ceremonial. Because Metz was very much a garrison city, he would have had some duties with the local community to make sure there was a good relationship between the military, who were there in force -- the French -- and the locals.

INTERVIEWER: So just to clarify, he was a French general?

HUMPHREYS: He was a French general. There is a picture of him somewhere but that was really the only occasion when we saw him at the ceremony where we opened the school.

INTERVIEWER: Was there anything peculiar about your school that you perhaps might not have found in a typical Canadian school?

HUMPHREYS: One difference was when we had been down near the PMQs, down in that school, we just wore normal school clothes, civilian clothes. Once the high school had moved up to the base, somebody in a position of authority -- that because this was the headquarters of the Air Division and there were a lot of VIPs visiting -- we should look presentable. So from Grade 10 right through Grade 13, I wore a school uniform. For the boys that was a blue blazer, gray flannels, white shirt, school tie which colours being black and gold, and with a crest on the jacket, on the blazer. The girls wore a gray skirt, white blouse and a blue vest. That was unusual. We soon became used to that and didn't think anything of it.

INTERVIEWER: Can you, in general terms, describe the curriculum?

HUMPHREYS: The curriculum was the Ontario curriculum. Going back to, just very briefly, to the early days, the people who actually took correspondence courses, that would have been correspondence courses from Ontario. From that moment on, it was strictly the Ontario curriculum, although the teachers were from all over. When I graduated from Grade 13 in 1964, the exams I wrote were the departmental exams, the same ones that anyone in Ontario was writing. They were sent back to Canada to be marked. So it was the Ontario curriculum.

INTERVIEWER: In your estimation, how would you rate the facilities at the school?

HUMPHREYS: At the time I would have thought the facilities were excellent. But in hindsight, now that I've been exposed to other schools, I see that they were pretty rudimentary. Somebody at our recent Metz reunion that we had in October 2003, reminded me that in our chemistry lab we had only one Bunsen burner for the whole class. That was a shock to me because I don't think I had remembered that. The library was outdated, small. I don't recall taking any books out. Of course, unlike a Canadian high school where the students would move from room to room, we stayed put and the teachers moved. Other than that, because we were on the base, we had good athletic facilities. We had the use of the base gym. We had use of all of the sports fields and, to a guy who liked sports, that was very important to me.

INTERVIEWER: How would you rate the quality of the staff, both teaching and administrative?

HUMPHREYS: I would say that we were all very pleased with the quality of the teachers and their dedication. They came from all over Canada. For a guy like myself who really had spent very little time in Canada – I only lived there three years – I learned a lot from those teachers. Another bonus was that if I had been in a large high school in Canada, being a boy of average stature, I would not have had a chance to play many sports. Whereas we had excellent coaches who came from large high schools. They had excellent coaching skills so it gave those of us who were athletically inclined really good foundation that we would not have had in schools in Canada.

The admin staff were excellent. The principal when I was there was a fellow named Mike Zaharia who ended up later dying. I believe he's at Chalois. A really well-respected ex-RCAF education officer who ended up staying over there. Of course, teachers are, as we know, people. We had one teacher who just disappeared at one point. We found out later that it was because of spousal abuse. He just vaporized and he was marched back to Canada. There was another female teacher who acquired a reputation among her fellow teachers for having round heels and was either sent back to Canada for conduct unbecoming or for getting pregnant.

I think the saddest, with all of these dedicated teachers, one sad event involved a teacher that I recall, was his 23 year old daughter came over for an extended visit. She came over from Canada and while she was taking a bath, the pilot light in their little geyser water heater went out and she was asphyxiated. I was in about Grade 10, I believe, at the time, possibly Grade 11. At the reunion we had in 2003, it's unbelievable the number of students who had memories of that particular incident. Whether they were pallbearers or whether it was the first experience we had with grief and death. I think for us it was very much a bonding experience. I remember the day that this teacher came back, a Mr. Gower. He had been off for a couple of months after his daughter had died and I remember in his first class, him teaching math and saying, "I can't go on. I can't go on." And he left the room. There were always one or two teachers who were supply teachers who could fill in.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have much to do with the local Canadian military or other NATO military units?

HUMPHREYS: Because I was an athlete, we played high school sports against the other air

force Wings. With basketball, our team was always the top basketball team in the Air Division. We would have a challenge match against the team from Soest for bragging rights for Canadian schools overseas. Also, when I was there the first time, and the second time, I played a lot of baseball at the Little League and Babe Ruth level. So I played up to age of 16. Most of the teams, in fact, were American teams. It's sort of ironic. In about 1962 I was selected by my team to try out for the Babe Ruth World Series, US European team. So here's a Canadian kid might make it to the Babe Ruth World Series as part of an American team from Europe. Unfortunately, I didn't make it. I was a third baseman but there were other American third basemen who were better than myself. Another memory I have of an association with Americans, one year when I was there the first time, I believe I was about ten, I went to an international Ranger camp which was run by the Americans on an island, Fano Island, off the coast of Denmark. I was there for three weeks.

INTERVIEWER: This was a Boy Scout organization?

HUMPHREYS: No, it was like a summer camp but it was called International Ranger Camp. I have no idea why they called it that but it had no affiliation with Cubs or Scouts or anything. But it was run by the Americans.

INTERVIEWER: Did you use Canadian or other facilities for sports? Gymnasia, that sort of thing?

HUMPHREYS: Absolutely. On the base we used the base facilities. We had the base gym. Metz, unfortunately, did not have an arena. So if you were fortunate or unfortunate enough to grow up in Metz, you never learned how to skate and you never learned how to play hockey. So this differentiated us from the other bases. Our energy went into the alternative sports. We were the best basketball players and volleyball players. But we couldn't skate. So that was most unusual. There were other facilities on the base, tennis courts, various other facilities. As a high school basketball player, we also played in the inter-section league on the base.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have access to American military facilities?

HUMPHREYS: Absolutely. Some of my best memories are the American facilities, primarily in Metz because they were close at hand. Regularly, I would go Friday night and Saturday and often Sunday, to the local Collin[?] Casern, which was a US Army garrison. There they had a gymnasium and, of course, the base theatre, PX, ten-pin bowling alley, which I used frequently, and the snack bar which was very important. That was within walking distance of my accommodation.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Tony Humphreys, end of Side One.

END OF SIDE ONE

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program. Interview with Tony Humphreys. Tape One, Side Two.

How would you rate the state of discipline among the students?

HUMPHREYS: Generally speaking, I think we were a fairly disciplined lot, as a group. Wearing uniform to school reinforced the notion that we were in the public eye and we had better behave. Of course, there were always students who were getting into trouble and had a little too much personality and hang out at the bars. But they were really in the minority. I know a friend of mine, I spent some time with at the reunion in 2003, his dad was the head cop for overseas. His father gave him explicit instructions that he was not to hang out with these three individuals because they were always in trouble with even the French police or the Canadian police. Generally, we were disciplined. There were those who had a lot of personality and were colourful. But typically what they did would enter more our lore rather than being seen as a bad thing.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say would be the main difference between going to a school in Europe, such as you've described, and one in Canada?

HUMPHREYS: I think the small size of the school meant that all of us, all grades right from 9 to 13 in high school, we all knew everybody. We played sports together and we shared a common bond. We were much closer as a group than I would expect any school in Canada to be. Your school, your social life, your sports, they all revolved around the same people. Because we had our first school reunion in October 2003, that just reinforced that whole notion.

INTERVIEWER: What was your impression of the Warsaw Pact at that time?

HUMPHREYS: It never really came up in Metz. We weren't really briefed at all in what action to take in case of an emergency. As a headquarters, Metz had no visible signs of preparing for war. We had no tanks. We had no army troops marching around. We had no aircraft flying around. We were basically a static unit, small, compact. My father worked in the special investigation unit at 1 Air Div. I guess, in a sense, he was operational. He had to travel to Germany often because, as a German-speaker. He didn't wear a uniform but he did wear a shoulder holster and carried a Beretta occasionally. When he strapped that on, I knew something was happening. I knew it had something to do with tracking down spies or some other unsavoury characters. So I did feel that it was a war zone.

Again though, Metz being a very heavily-fortified city, there were constant reminders of war in general. There was always that association with war. Whether it was the Franco-Prussian War, World War One, World War Two, or seeing the Americans that lived in Metz. I remember once when the French pulled out of Algeria, entire regiments moved back to Metz and moved into old, disused barracks. Paratroopers. So you were constantly reminded of warfare, not necessarily Warsaw Pact and the Cold War.

INTERVIEWER: You must have been very aware, then, of the NATO mission after your time in Europe?

HUMPHREYS: After that, yes. Of course, going directly back to Royal Military College where I took off a school uniform and put on a different kind of uniform, yes, I was quite aware by then

of what was going on and why we were over there.

INTERVIEWER: Tony, describe any interaction you might have had as an individual or as part of the community with the local European civilians?

HUMPHREYS: As I've described, Angus, because my parents were themselves European, and quite cosmopolitan, we were quite comfortable wherever we lived. Some of the older people spoke German and my dad was a fluent German speaker. My mom could get along in German because she'd lived in Germany for several years. They were able to converse. I could get by in French and language was never an impediment. I rode the school bus and actually, after Grade 13, I drove my scooter, my motor scooter, down to the French Riviera. Never felt out of place. Never felt threatened. Always felt at home. We would talk to our landlady and her family regularly. I had the odd friend from the economy. We shopped locally. I would buy the groceries. I would go to whatever kind of store we needed, butcher shop, bakery. My mother worked on the base so a lot of her co-workers were French nationals. We shopped in town which, in Metz, it was a wonderful shopping district. I understand it's even better. There were local festivals. There was an annual Foire [?] de Metz in I believe in May and a big meribelle [?] festival, for the little plums. We all participated fully, as well as the local restaurants and some kids went to the local bars.

INTERVIEWER: So tell me about your social life, both times?

HUMPHREYS: When I was there the first time, I was younger. I was in about Grade 5 to Grade 7. My social life, living on the economy, centred around my neighbours, the ones who were American and Canadian. We did a lot together. I played Little League baseball and had a pretty normal upbringing under those circumstances. Once I got to high school, of course, things were a little different. I lived on a street where there were no other Canadians. There was a need to travel farther afield to find my friends. But life centred primarily around school. School activities, school sports, the base theatre, the snack bar. There was a grocery store there. I was very active with, in the early days, the Cubs and later with the Scouts. The PMQs, that's where a lot of my friends lived. Friends who lived elsewhere on the economy. The US Army base, as I've described. I went to the gym there, the PX, the theatre. We'd go there often on weekends as well as to various other US bases. The big ones that we're still familiar with -- Kaiserslautern, Ramstein, as well as other smaller ones in France. Just little outposts that had a small PX and you'd come upon as you were going from Metz to one of these other larger bases. I was always busy doing something. Social life was very full, very rich. No phone, no television. You actually had to go and find your friends and then do things together.

INTERVIEWER: So how did you get around?

HUMPHREYS: In the early, early days I had a bicycle. I would travel miles and miles on that bike. I would go into the hills on the bike. Of course, it was every young boy's dream. You could be in a rural setting and find artifacts from the war. You were constantly coming across old German helmets. Scary, now that I think of it. German potato mashers that we would pick up.

INTERVIEWER: These are hand grenades.

HUMPHREYS: These are hand grenades. German hand grenades. It didn't matter where you went there were signs of forgotten wars. Whether it was World War Two, World War One. There were signs from the Franco-Prussian War.

How did I get around? Other things I did. Once I had graduated from the bike, I managed to get a moped and that meant I could get around faster. Toward the end, once I hit sixteen -- because at fourteen you could drive a moped. You didn't need a license. At sixteen, I could have a motor-scooter. That was the favourite mode of transportation for people, certainly in the Metz area. Everybody coveted the Lambretta scooters and the Vespas. Other ways I got around, there was the base bus which went from the base to the PMQs to the train station. So, if I could get myself to the train station, I could get to the base or the PMQs. I also took the local civilian bus in Metz. I took it regularly. School bus, of course, to get to school. And my dad would drive me when that was required.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of amenities -- you've described some of them for you, but what about your family and you?

HUMPHREYS: Living on the economy, we were fairly self-reliant. We were closest to an American base, the Collin Casern, so we used their facilities probably more than the Canadian ones. In the PMQs, there was actually a small community centre called the Green Shack and that was a bit of a hangout. The grocery store on the base. I recall that they had -- I guess in those days all the butchers were Danish. So it was like there had been a concession granted to this group of Danish butchers. All the meat came from Denmark, or through Denmark, and the butchers all had names like Newt and things like that.

We used the theatre on the base. We had a local radio station. I remember all of us would tune in. We would rush home and tune in the radio station because soon after we got home from school, that was when there was the rock-and-roll music. There would be a request and dedications. We couldn't have any live requests but outside the snack bar there was a box and we would put our requests and dedications in that.

INTERVIEWER: This was a Canadian radio station?

HUMPHREYS: This was the Canadian station. CFN. It was local. The fellow who was our announcer, who ran the radio station, was a guy named Bill Sweet. I recall him walking around with a jacket that I believe said Algonquin on it which didn't mean anything to me but now I recognize that he had taken broadcasting at Algonquin [College] or whatever it was that preceeded Algonquin. I remember years later hearing that he had died in the Ottawa area on Highway 17 in a car accident. So that was tragic. But that was very much something that brought us together was the radio station.

INTERVIEWER: How about messes? Did your parents attend the mess?

HUMPHREYS: They did. They weren't great mess-goers but certainly all of the major functions, they attended. There would be Christmas parties and various other parties that were

family events. We would attend. I recall also that there were events like Grey Cup parades and Grey Cup games, in fact, that were played by military members at a sports field near the school. It was just a way of bringing us all together and doing something uniquely Canadian.

INTERVIEWER: Was there television?

HUMPHREYS: Funny you should say that. I'd forgotten. In 1960, we had television for a short period. We rented it. We lived on the economy again and my parents rented a television. There was no Canadian television. Possibly there was American television. I wasn't aware of it. All we had was French television. 1960, I do recall watching the Rome Olympics on television. Another game show where they kept breaking panes of glass. All I remember is the announcer saying "Encore un carro casse[?]." I have these just little snippets of memory but they're all disjointed. They don't relate to anything but, yes, we did have television for a very short period.

INTERVIEWER: What else did your social life revolve around?

HUMPHREYS: Well, again, I was very active with Little League and Babe Ruth and Cubs and Scouts. I remember with the Scouts I was fortunate enough to attend a couple of jamborees. 1961 I attended the Welsh Jamboree which is in the Brecon Beacons [?]. We were there with a British troop from Weston Supermer[?] and we had travelled to Weston Supermer and then to Wales. In 1963 I attended the World Jamboree in Marathon, Greece. That was quite an adventure. I had earned my Queen Scout and we had a gathering of all of the boys who were going to this World Jamboree. We went to 2 Wing a month or two before the Jamboree to kind of do work ups and get to know each other and make sure we didn't embarrass ourselves when we went to the Jamboree. So I got to know some of the people from the other bases. In fact, I met some of them later when I went to military college. So it is a small world.

When we set out to attend the Jamboree we actually had to go to Frankfurt and hop on a train. We went right from Frankfurt to Athens by train. To do that you have to travel through the heart of Yugoslavia which, of course, was "Commie country". For us, this was quite different and exciting. I have very vivid memories of ... to us this was a communist socialist state. The train would pull up on either side along a platform or out from a platform and it seemed that hundreds of people would stream out across the tracks and try to get on this train. There was none of this ladies and children first. There would be men pushing women out of the way to get on our train. Some of the people exchanged badges with some of the Yugoslavian soldiers who had red stars and various accoutrements. It really was an up close and personal connection with the East Block.

Earlier we talked about the PMQs and the old fort that the PMQs were near. Again, for people who think in terms of a fort you think of something that is above ground with ramparts. In fact, a lot of the fort structure was at ground level or below ground. To make sure that no vehicles or tanks or other large formations of troops could advance rapidly there were all of these moats. Inside the walls of these moats were tunnels. Sometimes you could go for miles in these tunnels. You tried not to go deep. You tried to stay where you at least knew your way out. But they were very dark. It was not unusual to come upon dead bodies in those tunnels. In particular, in the early '60s when the French left Algeria there were a lot of French paratroops who had moved

back to Metz and occupied these disused quarters. They didn't like Algerians. The Algerians had come to France as cheap labour. They did the menial tasks. They did road work etc.... I think the paratroopers who were very operational -- they had come back and would ferret out some of these Algerians. In the middle of town or if they were unfortunate enough to be caught alone somewhere they would beat them up and on occasion they would murder them. I had friends who would find dead Algerians in these tunnels.

INTERVIEWER: Was there any opportunity, or necessity, for you teenagers to be able to have a part time job?

HUMPHREYS: There was no necessity and, in fact, there were very few part time jobs. There were a few that were highly coveted. There were some jobs working at the base theatre, either as ushers or selling popcorn. Very difficult to get those. Another place where there were a couple of jobs was at the PX. Specifically the roceteria. I know I was fortunate enough, only for two weeks, to work there while a friend was away on leave. I worked there for two weeks. I had to go in at five in the morning. A big American truck would arrive and we would have to unload the truck – another shipment of beef from Denmark. There weren't many part time jobs. Some were lucky enough to get jobs as baby sitters. I know one of my friends, Scott Fuller, worked at the driving range. Very few and far between.

Fortunately, your money went along way in those days. I ate every school day in the base snack bar. Just to give you an idea, all through grade 13 I ate exactly the same thing. I had: three hot dogs -- 10 cents each, French fries that was 10 cents, a bottle of Pepsi -- 5 cents, and a Cherry Blossom -- that was 5 cents. So my lunch was 50 cents. One dollar was five new Francs or 500 old Francs or 4 Marks for those who were in Germany. So there was not a compelling need for kids to get a job.

INTERVIEWER: You came back to Canada two times. Can you describe those trips?

HUMPHREYS: Well, the first time I came back was in 1958 and it was on board the HOMERIC. Again it was exciting. I had been Europe since 1954. It was time to go back. I recall again the life boat drill. I remember watching the movie "Old Yeller" and taking a fencing lesson and a few other activities like that. It was good fun and [a] real adventure. When we got to Centralia I had one of my friends who had left the year before me, who was now in my grade 8 class. So I had somebody who I at least knew to help ease the transition.

The second time I came back was a bit different. I had done almost all of my high school education in Metz I came back in August of '64, this time on a Yukon. I got on in Marville having spent all my high school years in Metz. Got off in Trenton. Stayed in the officer's quarters overnight, then the next morning I was taken on a regular hospital run from Trenton to Kingston. The driver dropped me off at RMC. I was there a day before the rest of my class arrived. So I was a bit of an anomaly. They didn't really know what to do with me so they taught me how to make my bed and generally didn't yell at me and was left to my own devices.

The next morning when I got up, there were still no other new recruits from my class. They had not arrived yet. So I had a chance to walk into Kingston. This was my first exposure to Canada

after all these years. There was a real culture shock. I hadn't used a phone. There were all these Canadians around. I recall it being quite an experience. By the time I walked back to RMC, my class had all arrived by train and bus and I could join them all knowing I was just one of them and everybody was yelling at us collectively. I recall there was a transition after that many years.

INTERVIEWER: So, what did you find so strange about Canada?

HUMPHREYS: Everything. Again the obvious things: the phones, the buses, the cars, the shops even going into a public washroom and having sort of a disinfectant smell like Lestoil, I hadn't been into a washroom and smelled that kind of smell. So everything about it was new. That didn't end until probably the next summer when I actually went on summer contact training and I was actually away from RMC. Because at RMC, all I had away from the college were short bursts. Reintegrating, if you will, into Canadian society. There was a bit of reintegration experience.

INTERVIEWER: Tony, during your two tours are there any main memories that stand out in your life?

HUMPHREYS: I think the whole European experience was special, Angus. It would be hard to just capture that in a couple of sentences. I have so many good memories about places, events, friends. The school experience was special. The travel; I have been all over Europe. When you hear of places, you've been there. The experience I had with the Cubs and then with the Scouts, the local Metz history. The whole historical perspective of that part of Europe really made it an even richer experience that it might have been.

INTERVIEWER: Then, in retrospect, what you say would be the net effect of the time abroad upon you in your later life?

HUMPHREYS: I guess part of the effect would be the same as any dependant moving around, having to adapt to new schools moving into new homes, making new friends. And, again, having my own kids, I know that they have gone through that. I think the exposure to Europe and European cultures and things European, especially back then because things were different. They really did help broaden your horizons. They helped us understand both the differences and similarities of various nationalities and cultures. The travel was such a broadening experience. So much, as I just said earlier, when somebody mentions the Riviera or Monaco or Cannes or Paris or Denmark, you have an immediate flashback. Your memory may be dated but you do have memories of having been there. As soon as that little spot is pricked with that needle, there are a million other memories that flow out from that, and I just can't describe how important that was to me.

When we had this first Metz reunion in 2003, it was such a special occasion. We had students and teachers. In fact, one 79 years old, attended from across Canada and the US. We had a couple from New Zealand, the UK, the Netherlands and other places, too. Even though there were people there who had been there from the '50s and '60s. Of course, when I was in the '50s, I was a young kid and at the same time there were high school students. I really fretted that we wouldn't have anything in common, that these were two different eras. But once we got together,

the fact that we had been there in two different decades was no impediment. The special bond we had by being in the same location, going to the same haunts, doing the same things, that we really did look at it as a bonding experience. In about 2002, with the Metz gang, I think we had a handful of people that I think we could have discovered where they lived. And now we have on our website, *metzbratz.org*, we have a database. We have a database of 360 ex-students and teachers – not many teachers, but mostly students – from when Metz opened in about '52 - '53. Not many from them then but right up to when Metz closed in 1967. But it was a fantastic experience and I feel that I was blessed to have those days.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think living in Europe made you perhaps a little bit more self reliant or self confident later in years?

HUMPHREYS: Absolutely, because all our children have become more self confident, self reliant by travelling around. They have developed coping mechanisms and strategies to survive as things change. The benefit we had was we had exposure to different languages, different lifestyles, different cultures, so we could take it even to the next level and that has been a very important aspect of our maturing process.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Tony Humphreys on 9 December 2004, interview ends.

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