

the ICC in France. Once you got them down to France, what then were the challenges that you faced?

MR. CRIBBINS: The terrific challenges that we were faced with were continuing materiel management of Army aviation in the fashion that had been done in Germany without the benefit of the top level local national skills that had been working for us in Germany since shortly after World War II. We just didn't have the same capabilities in France. This is not being derogatory about the French people. France still had an agrarian economy. We did not have the local populace available so we were in large measure dependent upon green suiters with some Department of the Army civilians as the core for management of the Inventory Control Center. We were in the process of going to a stock fund in the Army. That in itself was quite an adventure. Also, we had support of SETAF which is still in being as a command down in Italy. I guess one of the things that I did once we transferred the Aviation account down in France was become a trouble shooter, because I had an assignment to go to Zweibrücken and to Seventh Army when Brigadier General Harold K. Johnson was the chief of staff, later the Chief of Staff of the Army, was very much concerned

about the lack of support for aviation programs in Germany. Seventh Army Inventory Control Center was located in Zweibrucken. I had a couple of trips up there. Then I had a very interesting one to Italy when General Daley called General O'Neil and said that he badly needed someone to come down and square away his aviation program which was not working well at all. It seems that General Daley was flying over the Alps in one of our early U-8s. The pilot made an incorrect procedure as I understand it and one of the engines apparently failed at about 15,000 feet at a very critical point. When he landed, the General asked him what had happened. The pilot came unglued and said, "If we could only get those damn repair parts, we wouldn't have this kind of problem." I don't think the pilot was exactly right although they were having a parts problem. Parts were not the problem with the engine turning off over the Alps. At any rate, General Daley called General O'Neil and said that he had just about had it. He needed something done. General O'Neil called me in and said that he wanted me to go down and fix whatever needed fixing and tell him whatever needed doing in order to get SETAF back on board. Well, I went down to SETAF to where they had a central location for managing the SETAF aviation

program. I found two things down there. They had a small population of aircraft with a very low demand and accordingly a lot of the items that were on their ASL were one each. Obviously when they issued one, they automatically had a zero balance. To me that didn't make any sense. The first determination that I made was that if any item warranted being on the ASL it would be stocked in a quantity of two so at least they had one when they issued one. The other thing and probably the most important thing we did was to give SETAF the opportunity to draw on their own stocks and then post-post. Post-posting was always a dirty word to a logistician. By the time that SETAF got a requisition off to Orleans or Olivet in France and then got the release, the aircraft would have been on the ground for a week when they had the part already on hand. I gave them the authorization to draw the item, make a post-post transaction and requisition a replacement item. It seemed to work because I went back down as a follow-up a month later and I had a personal one-on-one with General Daley. His comment to me was "What is a nice Transportation Corps major like you doing in a place like this?" At any rate, it seemed to work all right because we certainly supported his fleet a lot better. It was a good lesson to learn,

but when you have an isolated place, it is not necessary to hang tough on some regulation that may apply across the board yet does not apply to a specific place. For example, the fact that we were restricting them to what the demand base said without recognizing mission essential items or recognizing that if an item was needed for stockage based on demand, you needed to stock at least two. When you issued one, you then had an item remaining on hand. Here they had items on board, couldn't touch them under the regulation until we gave them the post-post authorization. These kinds of things, I do believe, make you recognize that some things being standard is not the way to go.

INTERVIEWER: When you look at a system, almost any system, it doesn't account for every possible alternative. Someone has to make, as you say, those systems flexible. I guess this was prior to the MILSTRIP (Military Standard Requisitioning and Issue Procedures) system. You had the manual system and I guess people were trying to live within the letter of the law. How good were the people that you had to maintain the aircraft? Were they trained properly in your estimation?

MR. CRIBBINS: We had some old timers down in SETAF. It was a very good assignment and they had been there for some time. I had no problem recognizing the competence of the people. It was the system that was causing them the problem. The system didn't recognize the uniqueness of a situation that was so geographically dispersed. Interestingly, as recently as early November of this year, (1987) I was in Europe with Major General Dick Stephenson, Commander of AVSCOM. One of the problems that Major General Jack Rozier, the DCSLOG of Europe brought up was the problem in SETAF and its desire to requisition directly from the states rather than come through Europe because of the delay in getting parts. Here we are 30 years later and there is still the same sort of thing cropping up. This may, I guess, happen 30 years from now as well. General Rozier recognized the problem. I am not being critical of Jack who is a good friend as well as a colleague. He recognized the problem. He was doing what I think needed doing and that was fixing the system rather than using a unique methodology. In our case, 30 years before, fixing the system consisted of giving some leeway to the standard system or giving some waiver to the standard system in order to accommodate a unique case.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, let's take a minute and talk about your transition from France to CGSC. Of course, from there you went on to Washington, DC.

MR. CRIBBINS: I will remind you that I was an overaged in grade Reserve officer on full time active duty. I was making a career of it and was unable to become a Regular Army officer. I fully intended to stay on and eventually retire from the Army. I was very much interested in doing my thing for the Army which I certainly have loved dearly every since I first joined. When I was in France, I did the best job that I possibly could. One of the visitors to France was General Frank Besson who was the Transportation Corps chief. I had the opportunity to brief and interface with General Besson. [End Tape C-217, Side 1]

[Begin Tape C-217, Side 2]

MR. CRIBBINS: After the briefing was over, General Besson asked me what I planned to do or what I would like to do? I said, "I would like to do something interesting." He said, "Would you be interested in coming to Washington?" I said, "Yes, I would be." He arranged for me to go to the Associate Course at Fort Leavenworth which was run in those days. Quite a few

of the officers like myself were Reserve officers who did not have a regular commission. In order to bring me into Washington, I had to have completed CGSC. He had me assigned to Leavenworth from July to December 1959 in the Associate Course. Then I was brought into Washington. I think one of the important things about the France assignment was that my wife, Helen, had done some post graduate work before World War II in the League of Nations School in France and Switzerland. She spoke French very well and knew the country and had a good feel for the people. She had been president of the German-American Wives Club in Mannheim, and had also picked up with Mrs. O'Neill doing very much the same sort of thing in France, although we were not accepted in France the way we were in Germany. Very interesting that here we were for the first time in the country of an ally verses two tours and countries that belonged to people whom we fought in World War II; first Japan and then Germany. In no time in Japan or Germany, did I feel unwanted. I really thought that our acceptance in both of those countries was just super. When we were in Japan, for example, Helen taught English to young Japanese college students. In Germany, she was President of the German-American Wives Club. We became friends of local Germans. In France,

in spite of the fact that Helen spoke the language about as well as you could without being a native, we certainly had no feeling of being wanted at all. In fact, Helen said that one of the real drawbacks about understanding French was to listen to some of the remarks made in public when French people were around who knew that we were Americans and did not think that we understood French. Also, Helen at that time, predicted that when General deGaulle came on board that we wouldn't remain very long in France. When we went down to France, she was certain that judging from what had happened to deGaulle in World War II that we probably wouldn't stay very long. Her forecast certainly turned out to be true because we had not been down there all that long before we went marching back up to Germany.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, after you moved out of France, went on to the Command the General Staff College, you then made lieutenant colonel and became the Chief of the Programs Control Office in the Office of the Chief of Transportation. Prior to that, you served as Deputy Division Chief and Chief of the Secondary Items Branch with the Office of the Chief of Transportation. I guess General Besson's vision for your coming to

Washington paid off and you eventually made it here. I am sure that the duties that you had in Europe prepared you for those jobs because they were jobs of increasing responsibility. I would like to hear your comments on your early assignments here in Washington.

MR. CRIBBINS: Colonel Schiltz was the executive officer to General Besson. He and General Besson were very close. I am sure that Colonel Howard Schiltz had a lot to do with my being brought into Washington when General Besson came back from Europe. Helen and I arrived in Washington 28 years ago today (23 December 1987) from Fort Leavenworth and we hardly expected to be here 28 years later. At any rate, I was to be assigned to materiel management in the Transportation Office at Gravelly Point which was one of the technical service agencies belonging to the Department of the Army. When I arrived, I was skimmed off and for whatever reason, the personnel people decided that they could better use me in its operations office which each tech service had. Since they had the first call on it, they assigned me there. From the time I arrived in December 1959 until about April 1960, I was working in a job that I really had not looked forward to nor wanted, but I seemed to have had considerable

difficulty getting out of. I'll tell you a story about that. General Besson lived south of Alexandria, but just north of where we lived. We were living in a place called Waynewood. General Besson's secretary called me in one day and said that he was on the road and Mrs. Besson was having great difficulty because the water pressure had gone off and there was no water in the house. She knew that I lived nearby and asked if I would stop by and see what needed to be done to help Mrs. Besson. I stopped by the Besson's and Mrs. Besson told me what the problem was. As it turned out, my misspent youth as a horse trainer in Nevada paid off. I had owned a pressure pump while living in Nevada. The pressure pump worked out of a well and the pressure worked on the basis of having a tank full of compressed air. When that air eventually leaked out and replaced by water, you lost the pressure. When I found out that this was a sump pump, I went outside, found the sump pump, drained the water out, put air back in and by magic Mrs. Besson had her water pressure on. This was a very unusual achievement because if there is anything that I am not, it's well equipped to do plumbing jobs. When General Besson came home from temporary duty, he called me in and personally thanked me. General Besson, incidentally, is one of the finest persons I

have ever known in all my life. He asked me how I was doing. I looked at him and I leveled with him. I said, "Not very well." He said, "What's the matter, Joe?" I said, "Sir, I thought I was coming here to be in aviation and materiel management which are the things I wanted to do." I said, " I was taken out by personnel and I would really like to get back and do what I came here to do or what I had hoped I was coming here to do in the first place." He made no comment, but the next morning when I reported in, I was told that I was assigned to Materiel Management. That is how I became Deputy Division Chief and got back into the aviation materiel business.

INTERVIEWER: I take it that when General Besson was in Europe, he intimated that you would be going into the aviation logistics area.

MR. CRIBBINS: I must have been brought back on the basis of my knowledge of materiel management of aviation materiel and not on the basis of the personnel business. I could only assume that the reason I was brought to this Washington complex was because of my knowledge of inventory control, first at the Mannheim Ordnance Depot and then at Olivet, France. There

weren't that many around who had had that much experience. I guess General Besson was looking for someone to help run the aviation logistics out of the Transportation Corps headquarters.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall when the old Tech Services were disbanded and we formed logistics along functional lines?

MR. CRIBBINS: I certainly do. I arrived here in December '59. In 1960, President Kennedy was elected and became President on 20 January 1961. I will never forget that inauguration day because we had the worse snow fall that we had ever seen in Washington and it took me from 3 o'clock in the afternoon until 2 o'clock the next morning to get home some 12 miles from Gravelly Point. At any rate, Mr. Kennedy brought in Mr. McNamara who immediately established 101 issues. One of the issues was Project 80 which established the Army Materiel Command and got rid of the tech services. I was over at Gravelly Point at the time. In the spring of '62, I was in the position of either going on a study group and then going wherever I would be assigned. A letter came in to General Besson from the DCSLOG here in the Pentagon that asked for me by name

to come over and work in the Supply Management Division. At that time, I had Programs Control Division for General Besson. General Besson called me in and showed me this letter which had asked for me by name. He said, "How would you feel about doing this?" I said, "Do you mind if I talk to Helen before I decide?" He said, "No, why don't you tell me tomorrow what you want to do and I will support whatever you want." "However, he said, may I suggest that it looks like I am going to be Commander of the new Army Materiel Command and I am going to need a friend over there. Joe, you are a friend and if you can see your way, I'd like to see you over there." I went home and talked to Helen and I said, "Honey, I know I don't have any career in the Army. I am an over age in grade Reserve officer, but this is a challenge and that is what it is all about." I said, "I'd like to take a crack at it and besides, I've got two and a half years under my belt and with two and a half years under my belt, it is only going to be a year and a half at DCSLOG. No matter how tough it is going to be over there, I think I can survive a year and a half. I certainly owe General Besson whatever I can do to help him. If this is some small way that I can, I'll do it." She said, "Well, it is your career. Go ahead and

do it." I came over and was assigned here to the Supply Management Division as a Section Chief. We in those days had directorates, divisions, branches, sections, etc, you name it. There must have been close to 1200 people here in ODCSLOG at that time. I found a real shocker when I arrived here. When I arrived in Washington in December '59, whatever the ODP (officers distribution plan) was in those days, did not have an opening for a major in the Transportation Corps with my qualifications. I was carried on the books all the time that I had been over at the Transportation Corps headquarters as being assigned to a Class II activity. On the record, I had never been assigned to Washington. When I arrived here at ODCSLOG at the Pentagon in May 1962, I was beginning a brand new four year tour which I found out after I was assigned here but not before.

INTERVIEWER: As the Chief of the Weapons, Automotive, Aviation, Electronics and Missiles Section, it seems as if you had quite a few responsibilities associated with the management of those systems.

MR. CRIBBINS: I am probably the sheer optimist of all time. When I look at the jobs that I have had here, I realize that I was probably way out of my depth. At

any rate, I did have the five major accounts. I also had the job of transferring the OMA account into the stock fund. My predecessor who had put my name in this letter that had come over asking for me by name was a gentleman who was also an alumnus of the 101st Cavalry Regiment of the York National Guard. His name was Chuck Haydock and he had been a long time friend. Chuck was a Reserve officer on active duty for four years because he had gotten bored with what he was doing or had not been doing in New York. Chuck had had an absolute belly full of what he was doing here in the building. He resigned and then sent my name over to be his replacement. It was quite an assignment. From May '62 until January '63, I was the Section Chief. I was responsible for those five major accounts that you talked to. I was also responsible for transferring OMA into the stock fund and any other duties that came along. I think one of the toughest things of all to encompass was the fact that I became a lieutenant colonel in December of '61. As a junior lieutenant colonel in the Pentagon serving as a Section Chief, I reported to a branch chief who reported to a division chief who reported to a director. Each one of whom had a layer of at least two, that is an exec or a deputy. By the time you got to a director, there was a layer of

two plus an exec -- both being O6s and the exec's being O5's or sometimes an O6. That meant before I got to see the first general officer here in the building in spite of the responsibilities I had, I had a layer of something like six to eight people to go through. Brigadier General Olie Hansen was that gentleman who later became a friend, a terrific guy and a great professional. It was quite an exercise and an interesting departure from where we are now where action officers go and talk to the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of Army. In those days, if any action officer would talk to someone a grade above himself, he thought he was in seventh heaven.

INTERVIEWER: I take it that there was no such thing as "See Me's" in those days. One of the things that you mentioned was the level of responsibility. At the time, I know the military budgets weren't all that great. There had to be stiff competition for resources. Could you talk briefly about the challenges you had managing budgets and supporting logistics programs?

MR. CRIBBINS: The challenges were immense. However, we did have an advantage in that we still had the

residual from the tech services with all the knowledge of their particular commodities. We used them mightily even though the tech services in substance had been incorporated into the Army Materiel Command. In my view, and this may not be shared by others, General Besson, who was a great manager, officer and really a top notch logistician, took full advantage of the fact that he had been the Chief of a Tech Service. The other thing is, I did not in those days, although we had a lot of guidance from OSD, have the sensing that even though Mr. McNamara was judged to be a micro manager, the rank and file in OSD were not managing our programs nearly as closely as they seem to be nowadays. However, I did establish a very good relationship with a gentleman by the name of Cliff Miller who was from the Office of Management Budget which was then located in the west wing of the White House where the Vice President is now. In those days, the Office Management Budget and the Office of the Secretary of Defense really worked out of the same office in the Pentagon and what one agreed to, the other one would agree. It wasn't a case of having a defense budget go over to OMB and then get emasculated by OMB or changed at OMB before it went to Congress. In other words, what went forward was an agreed-upon budget. I can remember

several week-ends during the budget process that I would go over and sit down with Cliff Miller in the annex to the White House and work on budgets with him. When we agreed on something, it stayed put. There are ways of getting things done in spite of the layers of people. Let's say that was a very interesting experience and one I guess that has also put me in good stead since, but that was quite a different world from the one we are living in today.

INTERVIEWER: No question. I guess the Army has just gone through a scrub for a nine billion dollar cut in the '89 budget with OSD. You are saying that you had the opportunity to go over to the annex of the White House to work budget issues in the '60s. I know that kind of action is just not possible today.

MR. CRIBBINS: Yes, I was just a junior lieutenant colonel and I was able to go right over to OMB. This was in spite of the fact that in ODCSLOG I couldn't get to see a brigadier general without seeing six intermediaries. But I could walk in to the Office of Management and Budget and talk to the gentleman who was going to eventually put together the whole budget and he would listen to me! It worked out very well and

Cliff and I became hand-shaking colleagues and friends. When we agreed upon something, it stayed put. Also, this is very important now. The Congress had a very minimal number of staffers. There was very little or no micro management coming out of Congress. Very, very little, if any.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think is accounting for the congressional micro-management at this stage?

MR. CRIBBINS: Right now, I think we are badly outnumbered by the congressional staffers. When you hire staffers, you have got to give them something to do. When you give them something to do, they go out and look for work. I think what has happened, and I am not being critical of the democratic system, is that the Senators and Congressmen have gotten to the point where they are micro-managing the federal budget, not just defense, but every other element of the budget. They do it in a fashion as true staffers so that in my view, the staffers have really taken on the aura and often exceeded the very authority of the Congress.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, how did you become the special assistant for Tactical Air Mobility to the Assistant DCSLOG in 1963?

MR. CRIBBINS: I was doing this job in program and budget in the Supply Management Division. Lieutenant General Colglazier was the DCSLOG. He had known me from Europe because he had been a COMMZ Commander when I was the Transportation Officer and the ASO of the Mannheim Ordnance Depot. General Colglazier had known that I had had aviation logistics experience. In 1962, we were just getting into Vietnam and many, many problems were cropping up. General Colglazier called me in and said that he would like me to put together a program and present it to him of what I believed needed to be done in order to support Army aviation in Vietnam. It was pretty evident that there was going to be a sizable amount of Army aviation there. We weren't fighting over there then, but were still in the business of advising. In fact, an infantryman was not allowed in Vietnam at that time. I wound up with a special project which I called Air Vietnam before I knew that there was an airline called Air Vietnam. I went to General Besson and told him about the job that I was given. He gave me a lieutenant colonel and a

small staff out in the Transportation Materiel Command who had orders to report directly to me in the building. I put together a project with 48 issues that I believed needed to be done in order to support Army aviation in Vietnam. I was directed by General Colglazier to move out on this project. He had not consulted with my bosses when he had told me this. He also said that I was to report to the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Army once a week on the progress being made. I was to keep him up-to-date before I reported to the Chief or the Secretary. About that time and this was in the early fall of 1962, some of my superiors down in the Supply Management Division came unglued about the fact that I was reporting directly to the DCSLOG on a separate project. In October 1962, Brigadier General Chesarek came on board from Europe to replace General Hansen. In fact, he was in the SETAF Chief of Staff Office and had made General. Then he was moved, I think, into Germany where he had commanded an element for which General, then Colonel Joe Helser worked. At any rate, he called me in and asked me if I would like to come to work for him. I told him I thought that would be ideal because I would be back in aviation. It certainly looked like a much more interesting assignment since I did have

that special project which was in line with what he was talking about. He made the necessary arrangements. In January of 1963, I moved upstairs to become his Special Assistant for Tactical Air Mobility. At that time, the Chief of Staff of the Army, because of the increasing interest in Army aviation in Vietnam and the fact that we weren't really prepared for it, designated Major General Ed Rowney, now Ambassador Rowney, the DA Special Assistant for Tactical Air Mobility reporting to the Chief of Staff of the Army. He was located in what was then known as ACSFOR, now part of ODCSOPS. The remaining Army staff principals ODCSOPS, ODCSPER, and ODCSLOG were directed to establish a Special Assistant for Tactical Air Mobility and that was my job at ODCSLOG.

INTERVIEWER: Let me back up a minute, sir. There seems to be a great deal of emphasis being placed on Tactical Air Mobility at this point. What happened to cause that sudden interest of supporting the advisory efforts in Vietnam?

MR. CRIBBINS: I think it had become pretty evident that if we were going to get around in Vietnam since there weren't any good roads and there weren't any

adequate railroads, we were going to do it by air. It was going to be done through Army aviation and not through Air Force aviation. The helicopter was beginning to come into its own. We had H-34s in Europe and H-21s in the Pacific. In 1962, we had some UH1 Alfas upon which our people in Vietnam fastened some machine guns to and created the very first of what they called a utility tactical helicopter. They were really the first of the gunships. The Mohawk was in being and had been for some time. In fact, the Mohawk today is the oldest aircraft in inventory since it was first produced in the mid to late '50s.

INTERVIEWER: What aviation experiences did we have in Vietnam that led to the Air Vietnam program, and of course, General Rowney becoming the Army Staff proponent for Tactical Air Mobility?

MR. CRIBBINS: We had deployed five companies of CH-21s to Vietnam with 20 ships per company. Also, we had some Beavers, U-6s, some U-1s, OH-13s and as I said earlier, we had some of the very first Hueys over there at that time. There was a basis for recognizing that we badly needed to do something with the program. General Wheeler went over to Vietnam and while

inspecting the CH-21 companies which had arrived there about six to eight months before, he found that practically every aircraft in those companies was on the ground because of a lack of parts, people or something. It was evident that we had to take some drastic actions to support the aviation program for which we were not prepared to do. This was the genesis of the Special Assistant for Tactical Air Mobility. It was also the genesis for my job on this special project which I had picked up in mid-1962.

INTERVIEWER: Looking back, what do you feel caused us to miss the boat on anticipating the requirements for ensuring that our aviation program was on par?

MR. CRIBBINS: I think two things. I think that the President had declared that we would not get involved in the war in Asia. I think another thing was that when we got into Vietnam, we were hardly prepared for living in the modern day world where we had Army aviation. If we look back, and I had the personal experience of having been an infantryman in the jungles in the Pacific during World War II, that your ability to get around was very, very limited. Vietnam was a very long, but not a very wide country as you know. If

we were going to get around that country and influence anything, we needed mobility. We were there as advisors trying to influence what went on in the course of events to keep the South Vietnamese in command of the country, and Army aviation was the only way to do it.

INTERVIEWER: What would be your assessment of the Army's aviation logistics program at the time that you became Special Assistant?

MR. CRIBBINS: I hope this doesn't sound self-serving because it is not meant to be. In a way, Army aviation needed to be supported especially 8,000 miles away in a country like Vietnam. In fact, we weren't prepared to support it. Such being the case, it required some very specific actions such as doing what we now loosely call stove pipe. That is a term which I disagree with because to me, it is weapons system management that we are talking about, not stove pipe. What we realized was unless we took some unusual actions, we were not going to be able to support Army aviation in Vietnam. For example, I had made an analysis of the cost of a ton of ordnance items for ground vehicles versus a ton of aviation items for aviation systems and found that

the aviation items cost five times that of one ton of ordnance items. What did that say? It said that you better intensively manage or you can't afford it. It also said that you had better learn how to do things differently because of the safety of flight and other things that were associated with aviation. You had a very detailed inspection system to keep them safe and reliable and so forth. It was really a shocker to the Army to enter a different world of logistics support. We were charged with entering that world without much background other than the knowledge of aviation which said that "you could not afford to support jeeps the way you support aircraft" and I am darned if you can support aircraft the way you can support jeeps and keep them flying safely. Among the things we did and I can give you a statistical reference on this one. For example, engines for the Huey were just coming into the inventory in 1959 and 1960. In 1962, we actually had UH-1 Bravos coming on line which was the follow-on to the UH-1A. The engine cost \$65,000. At the peak of Vietnam, we were using 16 engines a day. You will have to check my math on this, Peet, as I remember them. What we were talking about was a pipeline that was worth 1.1 million dollars per day. Even in those days, it was big money. Now when we went to Vietnam, we

honestly believed when we looked at the standard Army's supply system that we needed a 13 month pipeline. That was eight months which included the turn around in depot and a serviceable time in CONUS and another five months overseas. Overseas equated to roughly a month each way in transit and three months in country. All told, you have a 13 month pipeline. That 13 months translated into 1.1 million dollars a day -- big time money. You are talking something like, if I remember correctly now and you will have to check my numbers here, about 390 million dollars. If you multiply that 13 months times 1.1 million, that 390 million dollars would buy at those rates, 800 Hueys. This is the difference between the 13 months, which I didn't explain. Excuse me, let me go back. We didn't have 13 months worth. We weren't bright. We didn't know how the dickens we could live with less, but what we did have was the ability to live with six months worth. The difference between the six months worth and the 13 months worth was 390 million dollars which would buy 800 Hueys. That was the difference between what we wound up doing and what we thought we had to do when we went in there. What happened? Were we smart? I would say we weren't very smart. We just didn't have the assets. What happened to us was that in Vietnam we

were forced into a position with little knowledge of what we were going to be doing there and without understanding how it was going to be done. Overnight, we had to learn how to manage. Another thing and I am jumping the gun here a little bit, but please remind me that when we get into the 1963, '64 time frame to relate an experience that I had with Major Richard H. Thompson, later General Thompson, establishing a support base for what became the 1st Cavalry Division. To answer your question very specifically, we were not all that smart. What we were faced with was fighting an unplanned war without mobilization and with a brand new asset called helicopters. We were in a new environment, in a very difficult combat zone which was 8,000 miles away without a lot of enthusiasm on the part of the country or the industrial base or anything else. All of a sudden we were faced with eventually building up to a fleet of 4400 aircraft in Vietnam 4,000 of which were helicopters. We were faced with doing this in the very early '60s and then ramping up our inventory of aircraft through 1969 or 1970.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, now we are going to move into the initiatives that went into building a log system to support aviation. While I am focusing on your duties

as Special Assistant, you worked on a number of projects. One that comes to mind is Project 35 which I think was a follow-on to a DOD effort which looked at ways to improve aviation throughout the entire defense establishment. Would you comment on how the Army focused on what it could do to improve aviation support?

MR. CRIBBINS: Project 35 was a project that Mr. McNamara designated as being how we would intensively manage high value critical assets. It was a DOD project headed by Ray Clark who was a super grade in the Department of Defense. It had Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force participation. I was the Army guy on this project. Initially we looked at high value components and eventually refined it down to looking at aviation engines in all four services. We spent nearly a year on that project. Actually, I was a dual member on the project. I was designated as being the Army representative and also at the same time I was the representative for General Frank Besson. Even though I was assigned to the Pentagon, I never did lose the umbilical cord with General Besson because we had been close over the years and I had always been one of his guys. Without changing my loyalty to the man for whom

I worked in the Pentagon, General Besson used me for many things that he thought were useful to the Army at large. At any rate, what we did was go to Army, Navy and Air Force installations and find out how they managed aircraft engines. The Air Force managed them by serial number which was something that we did not do in the Army. The Air Force also negotiated levels. They maintained accountability for the engines at the Pentagon in those days and later on at the Air Force Logistics Command. The whole thrust was that engines were too doggone important to be managed like other items. So you knew where an engine was by serial number, both the spare engine and the installed one. Then you were able to track the life cycle of an engine. The Air Force, for example, not only was able to track the inventory of engines by serial number, but had borrowed the insurance companies' mortality formula to develop mortality data on engines. For example, the insurance companies can't tell that Jim, Sam, Joe or Pete will die at a given point in time, but they can tell a person that is in the same age group, background, profession, ethnic-you name it, as Colonel Proctor or Joe Cribbins what the probabilities would be. The Air Force was using this data in 50 hour increments to establish mortality data on engines. It

worked very well because they were able to establish when engines would fail and the degree to which they would fail. The Air Force then established a system which kept 80 percent of the engines flowing around below the depot level and only brought 20 percent of them back through the depot in such fashion that they were able to manage these very high valued engines and components. We have learned very well from the Air Force. We plagiarized mightily as a result of this study.

INTERVIEWER: I believe that during the course of Project 35, it was revealed that in 1961 roughly 45 percent of all aircraft were available at any given time for flying. In Vietnam, some of the problems in Army aviation were a lack of trained maintenance folks and a lack of a standard system for requisitioning parts, resulting in inadequate supplies to maintain the fleet. As a result of your work in the Air Vietnam project, what changes were made in the logistics system supporting Vietnam?

MR. CRIBBINS: We talked a little bit about the business of managing engines by serial numbers and the order of magnitude of doing that. Regarding other

things that we did let me talk first about supply and then I'll talk about maintenance. In the supply system for example, out of Vietnam, we established a system where all requisitions for aviation flowed to the Aviation Systems Command or at the time the Transportation Materiel Command. They either filled or forwarded the requisition to the appropriate source. This worked very well because there was a single manager in charge. That was the important thing. There was someone in charge to chase down requisitions because even the ones that were sent to another NICP the Transportation Material Command followed up on them. If Vietnam needed to know what had happened to a part that had been requested, they could go to one source. That was one thing we did -- that worked very well. This procedure came unglued when DOD or the Office of the Secretary of Defense said "Nope, you can't do it that way" as Vietnam began winding down. We then established a weapon systems management designator code which is still in use today. We used LCA (Logistics Control Activity) which was established in the late '60s the way we used the NICP at the Transportation Materiel Command. That was one of the key things that we did for supply amongst others. Another thing we did about the time of my first trip to

Vietnam in February '62, was to send an officer from St. Louis over to Vietnam. He was firmly convinced that the way to support Vietnam was to put every part that you could possibly think of over there. We did just that and quickly found out that what we did was saturate the supply system and inevitably we didn't have what we needed or we couldn't find what was there. The saturation surely didn't work worth a darn. General Joe Helser later cleaned the whole thing up by drawing down the 17,000 lines to something about one-third of those lines and all of a sudden our readiness went up and our ability to find things improved. The system became more responsive because saturating it wasn't the answer. It isn't the answer today and we are finding that out again. Buying and stocking a lot of things isn't the way to do it. Buying selectively and delivering and distributing selectively is what is needed which requires management. We set up an element of the Army Materiel Command in Vietnam which had an MMC, (Materiel Management Center). The AMMC operation was separate from the First Log Command and its materiel management center. It managed all items that were peculiar to aviation. Initially, there was a great outcry about the fact that had a separate center. Yet, General Joe

Heiser, who was probably one of the finest logisticians I will ever know, even after he commanded the First Log Command, had to agree that the aviation system worked doggone well. He was not about to do anything with it when he later became DCSLOG. Yet, when he was Director of Supply and Maintenance, ODCSLOG he wondered why in the world we had a separate system. In other words, what we really did was set up an intensive management system which people called stove pipe. I call it weapon systems management. I do think it is more descriptive because what we are doing is managing a weapon system consistent with its supportability, its criticality, its mission support and everything you could think of. That was basically the supply part. If I missed any of that, maybe I will get back to it. Now on to the maintenance challenge. Let me talk a little about what happened in February '62. General "Red " Cooper was the Assistant DCSLOG of the Army. I was the Assistant for Tactical Air Mobility. I was a lieutenant colonel and he was a major general. General Cooper was a combat arms officer, a former division commander, who had become the ADCSLOG, probably serving for the first time in a logistic job. I guess it was in January '63 when I walked into his office and said "Sir, in looking at Project Air Vietnam, we have a very

major problem with the H-21s. They have wooden rotor blades that are coming apart in that climate. We've had to take off the horizontal stabilizer because of the density altitude and the aircraft won't fly. When you take those stabilizers off, you have to restrict the forward speed to something like 60 or 70 knots. The aircraft is old and tired. Unless we make a major effort, we really cannot support this aircraft and meet the missions that are needed in Vietnam." He said, "What's the answer?" I said, "Well, we have the UH-1B coming on which has a gas turbine engine and is the first of its kind. It is a new generation of helicopters. It's got all of the capabilities of an H-21 although not nearly the capacity. The UH-1 Bravo has a much smaller air frame than the UH-1H which succeeded the Bravo. It also had a 44 foot instead of a 48 foot rotor blade. The shaft horsepower of the engines in those days were I think around 900 shaft horsepower where now we have 1500 shaft horse power on the UH-1H. I did say, in talking to the operations people that we were in agreement and had to replace the H-21s. This went on during a one-on-one with General Cooper in his office. He said, "Well, what do you want me to do?" I said, "Sir, I would suggest that what you need to do is talk to the Chief of Staff and recommend

that we replace the H-21s. I have a multi-million dollar bill to modify the H-21s which I don't think is going to work anyhow. I think we should replace the H-21s with the UH-1 Bravos." He looked at me and said, "Joe, I don't disagree with what you say, but that is not within the terms of my job description. That is not really a logistic responsibility." I said, "Yes sir" and started to walk out. To my great surprise and I will never forget this because I liked General Cooper. He called me back. Here was a major general talking to a lieutenant colonel. We were about the same age or pretty close to it because I was an overaged lieutenant colonel and he was a major general. He looked at me and said "Joe, you are disappointed in me aren't you?" I said, "Well, I wouldn't put it that way sir." He said, "OK, Joe, I'll do it." That week, we had orders to go to Vietnam with a letter from General Buzz Wheeler to General Harkins who was then what eventually became the COMUS MACV. Colonel Frank Clay from ODCSOPS, who is the son of General Cassius Clay, Colonel Ed Neilsen, an aviator from ODCSOPS who later became Project Manager, someone from ODCSPER and I took this letter to Vietnam. Our first visit when we got to Vietnam was with General Ed Rowney who by that time had been assigned there as Chief of what I believe

was the Army Concept Team in Vietnam (ACTIV). General Rowney put us up in a suite next to his in the Rex Hotel in downtown Ton So Nhut. We told him what the proposal was and I remember very clearly that we were very fortunate. We had a clear day and we got a squad of very small Vietnamese and we put them in a Huey Bravo complete with packs and had them take off and said "See Sir, it carries a squad." Of course, we were carrying Vietnamese in those days. This was February '63 and it was very early in the game. At any rate, that was the initiation. Please understand now, I was not the only guy who drove the Huey Bravo's in, but my problem was that we couldn't support the H-21s and I wanted to get the logistics support to say, "If we can't support the H-21s what are the alternatives?" You either modify the H-21s or you replace them. The alternative was to replace them.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the organization for maintenance support for aviation in Vietnam during this time?

MR. CRIBBINS: This was one of the things that we really came to grips with in the Air Vietnam Project. We found what a disaster the H-21 companies were in.

We looked at the maintenance concepts that they were using. When General Wheeler found that the H-21 companies were in such trouble, he directed a critical look to determine what needed to be done. The Transportation Corps was responsible for aviation maintenance. Out of that came something that I really believe is not only a thing that happened in the past, but a way of the future. I wrote an article last year on it. Transportation Corps had established TO&E55 Series, several which were for units which they call KD Teams for helicopters and KC or KE Teams for fixed wings. The purpose was to have a team associated with a particular mission design series or type of aircraft. For example, the H-21 maintenance team in this case, as I remember, consisted of about 56 people. It was complete unto itself with a team commander, a small administration section and personnel with the critical skills needed to maintain H-21 aircraft including running the aircraft peculiar supply system. What we did was to dispatch KD teams and collocate each with one of the H-21 companies in Vietnam. Those teams made the difference between success and failure because the basic H-21 company could only do what was known to the ground force as organizational maintenance. The KD teams could perform up to DS/GS maintenance. We called

it Integrated Direct Support Maintenance (IDSM). They made the difference and gave us the maintenance capability to do all of the inspections and the periodics. In those days, you see, we had a pre-flight, a post-flight, intermediate 25 hour periodic, and a 100 hour periodic inspection. For example, for a Huey, at 1100 hours a massive periodic, for the Chinook every 600 hours of massive periodic inspection. Lesson learned there was simple. I talked to General Wickham later on this concept and I have written an article about it, too. When General Wickham was Chief of Staff and was coming on board with the Light Infantry Division as part of the Army of Excellence (AOE), there was a necessity to slim down the operational units. I explained that we needed to look very critically at the potential of the KD team concept by weapon system so that if we deploy a Light Infantry Division, for example, and the division would be engaged in excess say of 30 days, you could have this team fall in on an aircraft system such as the Black Hawk and help maintain operational readiness. I think this concept has a lot merit. It certainly got us through Vietnam. The other thing, and I brought this up yesterday at a meeting with the Chief and Vice Chief, is that we had stronger TO&Es in those days than

we have in the Army of Excellence. However, we could not support those relatively simple birds in Vietnam in combat with the TO&E structures that we had then.

INTERVIEWER: What is driving you to say that those TO&Es were stronger? Have we not improved our capability to maintain equipment over the years by our efforts to design systems that are not manpower intensive to maintain?

MR. CRIBBINS: Let me give you a for instance. We were paying, let me use a Huey because that was the basic aircraft that fought throughout Vietnam once we entered it we were paying \$250,000 for a Huey. The Black Hawk, for example, is not a big Huey. The Black Hawk costs over four and a half million dollars. It isn't just escalation. A Black Hawk is a very complex bird. It is a much more reliable bird, but it takes a whole lot of maintenance. There isn't any question about it. One for one, the Black Hawk would take at least as much maintenance and a heck of a lot more electronic maintenance and high skill maintenance than the Huey ever did. The Huey was a very primitive bird compared to the Black Hawk when you look at the systems to be maintained. Yet, in those Huey units, we not only had

the basic support element, but a KD team with some 56 people assigned to them as an integrated part. Eventually, it became the AVUM. Since then, the AVUM has been drawn down. In a briefing yesterday, BG Don Williamson, gave an evaluation of the Apache for the Chief of Staff. He pointed out that the T0&E, for a bird that is an electronically oriented bird has one electrician. What do you do when that electrician gets sick, lazy, on leave or what. You only have one. It is just like a zero balance when you have only one item in the inventory. Here we have a bird that requires more than one electrician, but the AOE has drawn down the T0&E to one. What I am saying here is that the T0&Es that we had in the days of Vietnam for relatively simple systems were much stronger in the numbers of people and skills than the T0&Es today. Even then we couldn't live, as I told the Vice Chief yesterday, with the T0&E as it was structured. When we had 4400 aircraft in Vietnam, we had over 2000 contract personnel who were working at the intermediate level and at the user or unit maintenance levels.

INTERVIEWER: I understand your point about the complexity of the new systems. If we look at what has been happening the last few years in the unit

productivity studies, it has been perceived that we get a better return on our investment by putting the sophisticated test, measurement and diagnostic equipment as well as some special tools, etc. that will give us improved capability with fewer people. You are saying that although we have more sophisticated weapons, we can't compare sustainment requirements of the older systems with our systems today.

MR. CRIBBINS: Let me compare the Hueys with the Black Hawk. Maybe that is the best comparison. We replaced 23 Hueys with 15 Black Hawks. That means the Black Hawk is much more productive. It is a bigger bird and it does things much faster and quicker. When we looked at the Black Hawk over the years, I think that man-hour wise, man-hours per flying hour, the Huey and the Black Hawk are fairly comparable which means that the Black Hawk is much more productive than the Huey. What happened is, that with the necessity of reducing the number of maintenance people, those remaining have to be much more able to diagnose and to do the things that are much more complex than with the Huey. In spite of the reliability centered maintenance and the improved productivity, the Army of Excellence TO&Es will not support what needs doing in combat. My analogy was

that when we had stronger TO&Es, that is with more people and skills, in the TO&Es with the simpler systems, we couldn't support aircraft adequate in combat without 2000 contractors supplementing maintenance people. The other thing is, my boss, Lieutenant General Ross, the DCSLOG of the Army, certainly feels strongly about this. I think that under the LUPS, which is the Logistics Unit Productivity System, that we have made many, many optimistic promises that may not be realized. In other words, we may have drawn down our CSS structure beyond the limit of productivity that will have a pay back, if you understand what I mean? General Ross is very much concerned about this. Promises, promises, promises are all the wonderful things that LUPS is going to do, but will LUPS do all of these things in combat or do you still have to go back to basic business. What we learned in Vietnam was that we have to supplement, manage and maintain. We did three things in Vietnam maintenance-wise. The first thing that we did was to move about 60 to 70 percent of direct support maintenance into the operational units using the KD Teams. We looked at the residual intermediate level maintenance where so much of the general support was beyond the capability of the units. We also looked at

this six month pipe line of engines. What it meant was bringing engines back to CONUS, repairing them and flying them on ALOC rather than trying to repair them in country. I will tell you something that is important on the logistics side in doing all of these things. We found that we had a hard core requirement between the operational unit and the depot, but that requirement was only about 30 percent direct support and maybe 25 to 30 percent general support. Then came the big question, "Why did we need direct support units and general support units? Why didn't we amalgamate them into an intermediate level?" Well, that is how the three levels of maintenance came about. Normally, I would say that we don't "do" things here in this office, but I will say this without qualification, the three-level maintenance concept took place right here in this building in what was then the Directorate of Aviation Logistics; now the Aviation Logistics Office.

INTERVIEWER: The three-levels of maintenance is still in use today.

MR. CRIBBINS: Yes, it is still going on today. We had a contractor do a study on it and we had the Aviation Logistics School look at it. We didn't do all the work

here, but we drove the program from here. I had the greatest support in the world which came from General Harold K. Johnson, the Chief of Staff, and General Creighton W. Abrams, his Vice Chief of Staff.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that you wanted to talk a little bit about the transition of depot maintenance for Army Aviation from the Air Force to the Army.

MR. CRIBBINS: Yes. That transition took place about 1961 when I was in T7 which was the Transportation Corps building located on the Gravelly Point. What happened was that the Army decided that it needed an Aviation depot. We went through what turned out to be a very unnecessary exercise. What we should have recognized was that two contenders, Corpus Christi, Texas where there was a Naval Air Station and Brookley Air Force Base where I had been assigned at one time in my career, in Mobile, Alabama had some space available. We could have saved, as the saying goes, "our breath to cool our porridge" if we had only stopped to think for a second that in '61, the Vice President of the United States, Lyndon Johnson, was from Texas. Lyndon Johnson had been the senior guy in the Senate for many, many years and he did not come from Alabama. As it turned

out, I'm not saying that he was the only driver, but I would say that he certainly had a lot of influence because Corpus Christi was the eventual choice. I think that whatever influence Vice President Johnson may have had on this, it was a positive influence because it was the right place to go. Brookley Air Force Base was also a good place, but Corpus Christi offered many more things than Brookley did particularly a great work force. At any rate, in 1961, I was not the principal player, but I did participate in establishing what became known as ARADMAC which was the Army Aeronautical Depot Maintenance Center. General Besson said that he didn't care what the devil we called it so long as he could say the acronym. This was, don't forget, still in the days of the tech services. ARADMAC later became Corpus Christi Army Depot (CCAD). At the same time, there was an ongoing effort in the Transportation Corps to take over research, development and procurement of Army aircraft from the Air Force which was handled separately from the support side. They convinced the Office of Secretary of Defense that the Army should become independent and transferred those activities out to the Transportation Materiel Command. By 1961, we were

autonomously supporting Army aviation and the Air Force was no longer in our aviation business.

INTERVIEWER: What were some of your other significant duties and projects during the period 1961-63?

MR. CRIBBINS: Another really important one, and I am trying to think of it, was Project 65. That was on aircraft readiness. I found that our system for tactical air mobility was a little bit unbelievable in that we had a readiness system which was operating on a supply bulletin. The supply bulletin applying to readiness said that if an aircraft was ready for four hours a day or more, it was ready all day; or if it was ready less than four hours, it was down the whole day. That meant that if someone wanted to have a good readiness report, all they had to do was have an aircraft up on Friday afternoon and it would be up through the weekend. It was an unbelievably bad system. [End Tape C-217, Side 2]

[Begin Tape C-218, Side 1]

MR. CRIBBINS: I sent this group to St. Louis to take a critical look at how we ought to approach aviation readiness and recognized one time spot readiness wouldn't work. You really needed to look at readiness 24 hours a day 365 days a year. That was about as general as the guidance given these people out in St. Louis. Let me make something very clear, when I say "I", I was in the position of being a catalyst and other people did the work. Frankly, I borrowed ideas and put them together and acted as a catalyst. When I say that "I did this and I did that" please recognize that here in the building, one doesn't really do things so much as one initiates an idea or takes someone's ideas and makes them work. I had the great advantage of being able to see some of them through. At any rate, the team took a look at readiness and came up with what became AR710-12 in those days. Now it is a new regulation. It encompasses all readiness. By January 1964, we had established an Army Aviation Readiness System that accounted for aircraft to the nearest hour, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. It accounted for aircraft being operationally ready, down for supply or down for maintenance. It also accounted for aircraft by serial number wherever they were located and that became the Army Aircraft Inventory

Status and Flying Time Report. We had three outputs from that report which are still in being. We have a white book which contains the total aircraft population and a summary of where aircraft are. We have a gray book which more closely shows where the aircraft are by serial number. The gold book is the largest book which has several sections. I don't remember all of the sections, but you could find an aircraft by serial number wherever it is. If you know a given unit, and wanted to know the type of aircraft that a unit has, you look at a given section and it will tell you what the unit has. If you wanted to chase down the numbers of a whole fleet of aircraft by mission design series, you could do that using the gold book. In January 1964, the genesis of what is now the aircraft readiness reporting system has had a few refinements since then. For example, changing the terms from NORS and NORM to NMCS and NMCM and adding partial or fully mission capable to what was originally operational readiness. Basically, what we have had since January 1964 is a Department of Defense Aviation Readiness System to which all of the services adhere. Another thing that we did that was important and still applies was to establish standards of readiness. One of the things we thought out early was that when you establish standards

of readiness, you had to be very careful about what those standards were. The standard should be objectives or goals, and must be somewhere within what we believe to be about five percent of what is attainable. If you ask for more than what is attainable, one of two things will happen. Either the people in the field throw up their hands and say "The heck with it" or they get out the "Liar's Guide" then begin to dicker around with records. We found that after we established this system in 1964, one of the problems with the system was that we were asking for a monthly report known as the DA Form 1352. People were not keeping daily accounts and there was a great inclination of waiting until the last day of the month and then doing all of the bookkeeping and saying "Let me see now, aircraft serial number did so and so last month." What I did through the group that I had out in the Transportation Materiel Command, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Joe Healy, establish a DA Form 1352-1 which was a daily system which was auditable and tracked the status of an aircraft while the memory and the knowledge was fresh in everyone's mind of what happened the previous 24 hours. That is still in being today and that is the basis of our readiness reporting system today.