Interview with Thomas Lamont

VRT-A-L-2018-004.01

Interview Date: January 30, 2018

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today, is Tuesday, January 30, 2018. I'm Mark DePue, Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today I've got my first session with Tom Lamont, Mr. Secretary I believe, the former secretary of the Army, assistant secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs...

Lamont: Correct.

DePue: For President Barack Obama.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: That's why I have the opportunity to talk you. I'm excited about getting there, but as I mentioned to you in our pre-interview, we always like to get plenty of background. In your case, there are all kinds of interesting topics to discuss about Illinois politics, and I like to talk about Illinois politics. Let's start off with the basics, when and where you were born.

Lamont: I was born in Jacksonville, Illinois, living in Virginia, Illinois, right nearby, in 1947.

DePue: March of forty-seven?

Lamont: March 8, 1947.

DePue: Tell me about your parents; let's start with your dad.

Lamont: My father, by the name of Edward Lamont, and my mother, Margery Lamont, both were from Franklin County, Illinois, Benton and West Frankfort, respectively. My father—being the youngest of eight—and my mother eloped at the age of eighteen. Then my father attended college at the University of Illinois as an agriculture major, graduated, returned. Actually, I guess he went straight to Virginia, Illinois. I don't know if he had a previous teaching job, but he became a school teacher until he went into the service during World War II and was released from service. He was a noncommissioned officer in the service, as a draftee, in armor in Patton's Third Armored [Division]. He got a chance to see a little bit of Europe, came back in mid-1945 and was released from service. [He] resumed a teaching career.

I had an older brother, born in 1942, by the name of Jim or James. Then I was born in 1947, and we lived in Virginia until I was five years old. Later [we] moved [to] a couple of different places, including back to Franklin County and then returned to Virginia, Illinois when I was in the eighth grade. I graduated high school there.

DePue: Did you dad grow up on a farm?

Lamont: My dad did not grow up a farm, but in southern Illinois everybody worked on a farm. My mother did, in fact, grow up on a farm. Even though my grandfather was a country school teacher, he lived and owned a farm in Benton, Illinois and farmed all his life.

DePue: How would you describe your dad, personality-wise?

Lamont: Rather quiet and reserved, very typical, I think, growing up in a modest household in southern Illinois, I don't think much different than most anyone else of that ilk. His father died at an early age, when he[Lamont's dad] was fifteen but [my grandfather] had been a physician in the town of West Frankfort. Beyond that my…

I had numerous uncles on both sides of the family who were farmers, farmers and coal miners. I know my father spent a fair amount of time working on the farms, because he talked about it. He always was drawn to the agriculture business, to such time he even had an opportunity to purchase about eighty acres of land in southern Illinois and farmed it with an uncle of mine, his brother.

DePue: Did your dad talk much about his war time experiences?

Lamont: No, my father seldom talked about it, unless he got direct questions from me. Typically his conversations dealt with something funny or unique that he laughed about, whether stumbling on a vineyard and a wine cellar, which they felt the need to supply the tank and their tank company, on a daily basis, until they were about seventy-five miles away, and they stopped sending a jeep back to replenish their supplies. He talked about some of the discomforts of

war, being in the Battle of the Bulge area in a tough winter of 1944 and sleeping in the snow because they thought the tank was way too cold, things of that nature, what soldiers typically gripe and complain about (laughs).

DePue: It sounds like he was a tank crewman.

Lamont: He was a tank crewman.

DePue: And it sounds like—to use a phrase that was used in the civil war—he did see the elephant; he saw combat.

Lamont: He saw combat but I think at a later time, I think in the winding down stage. Other than that I don't know a whole lot, quite frankly. I didn't note, when I found some of his service records, that he received a bronze star, which I think was relatively common, but I saw where he and his tank command were given credit for the capture of a number of German soldiers. Now, he would suggest they were surrendering left and right, and they didn't have time to deal with a lot of prisoners. But certainly, at some point in time, he obviously turned some in.

DePue: You mentioned at the beginning of this that your parents eloped at a pretty young age.

Lamont: Yes, they did.

DePue: Did the families reconcile themselves with that after a while?

Lamont: The whole story is, my father borrowed the car, one of his brothers' [cars], and they ran off to Kentucky, not being that far away from Kentucky. Across the border in Kentucky [they] were married and came home and lived apart. They didn't tell anybody. Several days later, if not weeks later—I don't really know—my mother's mother found the marriage certificate and had a little come to Jesus discussion, I think. My dad was out of school, out of high school by then, was already getting ready for college at the University of Illinois. So my grandmother suggested it was time they start acting like husband and wife. And they did.

DePue: Tell me a little bit more about your mom. What was her maiden name?

Lamont: Her name Margery Alice Kern, Margery with a g-e-r-y, oldest of five, grew up typically on a farm. At one time, my grandfather had been a principal of a school in town in West Frankfort, Illinois, but most of his life they lived on farms, and he taught and was a principal of a country school until the mid-sixties, when that school closed.

She worked while my dad attended school. [She] worked off and on throughout her life but followed a more traditional path in the fifties and sixties, where she stayed home while the kids were home and worked part-

time as opportunity allowed. Then, when I left the household, being the last child to leave, she worked full-time. As I recall, primarily in the Secretary of State's office in Springfield, until she retired there, as a secretary, far as I know.

DePue: You said your brother was born in forty-two?

Lamont: My brother was born in forty-two; he's five years older than I. He attended college at Southern Illinois University and then went to dental school at Washington University in St. Louis and went into the service in 1967, after he graduated from dental school. [He was] sent to Vietnam, spent his year and extended a couple of months so he could get an R&R, came back and finished out his military career obligation at the induction center in St. Louis, where he then located his dental practice.

[He] retired about a year ago from his practice, which was in Clayton, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis. He lived in an adjoining community of… All of a sudden, I'm drawing a blank…Clayton and Ladue, he lived in Ladue and still remains to this day in the adjoining community of Ladue, Missouri.

DePue: Going back to your mom, when your dad was overseas, I'm sure she was worried about him, like everybody else was at the time, did she live with her parents; did she...

Lamont: She lived with her parents, to the extent I know. I'm pretty sure she did for most of the time, yes.

DePue: How would you describe her personality?

Lamont: She was all mother. She was the dominate personality, probably, in my life. My dad was more the disciplinarian, as necessary, and mom was the good mother who kept an eye on all of us and [was] always very encouraging, attended sports. I had a typical fifties, sixties family, growing up.

DePue: You were right at the beginning of the baby boom generation.

Lamont: Correct.

DePue: Tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up in the fifties and early sixties.

Lamont: I don't recall a whole lot of the fifties. We certainly were not of any means, but you might… Even then, I think you'd probably call us middle-class or lower middle-class, in terms of our financial situation. We did have **a** car. I do remember a big time in 1957, my dad got a new car. That was pretty exciting for us all.

We were in southern Illinois at that time; that would be my ages of ten, eleven, twelve, typically, around that time. You know, we all had our own little part time jobs. We all did whatever kids do then, although we were pretty loose, ride our bikes, play a little Little League.[1] We grew up where people, you know… I had a twenty-two rifle—it was never an issue—where I'd go get the twenty-twos out, put them across our bicycles, and my friends, we'd ride out, either to the local dump and try to shoot rats (both laugh) or we would go hunting on our own. We did a lot of hunting, a lot fishing, a lot of typical outdoor activities that somebody in southern Illinois might do.

DePue: I hear stories sometimes; "Well, we left the house early in the morning, and nobody worried about us, but everybody knew who we were."

Lamont: And that's pretty much the case with me. We left the house, and we came home at dinner time, unless you heard your mother yelling, "Come home for lunch." We played every game you could think of, from stick ball to… We never had enough to play a full game of baseball, so you could only play half way. There only might be a right fielder, so you could only hit to the right field or vice versa, something like that. We made up our games as we went along.

As you might think, [we] did a lot bicycle riding, lot of outdoor basketball at somebody's hoop above somebody's garage door. Minimal planned activities, although I was on a Little League team for a couple of years. I didn't particularly care for it, and that was the only organized activity. But I did play sports in school. Other than that, I don't know that it was anything different than a typical childhood.

DePue: Were you a Cardinals' fan?[2]

Lamont: Absolutely.

DePue: Did you get a chance to listen to the games?

Lamont: I did. In fact, I listened to games every chance I could. The first game I recall—I have a scorecard somewhere—my dad took us down to a game in old Busch Stadium, where it was…We had standing room only tickets. That's all I remember, because he finally let me sit down, with my feet dangling over a rail somewhere. Otherwise, you got to go to a game maybe once or twice a year, if you're lucky; that was it. It was always a Sunday afternoon.

[1] Little League Baseball and Softball (officially, Little League Baseball In) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in South Williamsport, Pennsylvania, that organizes local youth baseball and softball leagues throughout the United States and the rest of the world. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_League_Baseball)
[2] The St. Louis Cardinals are an American professional baseball team based in St. Louis, Missouri. The Cardinals compete in Major League Baseball (MLB) as a member club of the National League (NL) Central Division. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Louis_Cardinals)

We didn't really have a football professional team to cheer for at that time. We never heard of the Chicago Bears, or St. Louis did not have a team at the time.[3]

DePue: Were you too far south to be routing for the Bears then?

Lamont: Yeah. We never had a Chicago radio station. Your radio stations were always St. Louis oriented or local, both as teenagers… KXOK [630 AM]was the kids top forty station, and KMOX [1120 AM], of course, was the Cardinals' station. Only later, when I went off to college, did I get introduced to the Bears.

DePue: Where did you go to high school?

Lamont: I went to high school in Virginia, Illinois, class of sixty-five. There were forty-nine of us in my class.

DePue: Which means, if you want to do a little extracurriculars, you get a chance to do a little bit of everything?

Lamont: I played football, and I played basketball.

DePue: They had a football team?

Lamont: Oh, yeah. Yes, we had a football team (DePue laughs). We never lost a game. After my first game of my sophomore year, we tied one game. We never lost another game while I was there. I was a Little All-State Honorable Mention, I'll have you know.[4]

DePue: What was the position?

Lamont: I was a tackle.

DePue: How big were you at the time?

Lamont: I was about 195 pounds.

DePue: You never lost a game?

Lamont: No.

DePue: Did they have the same classes, divisions, as we do now?

[3] The Chicago Bears are a professional American football team based in Chicago, Illinois. The Bears compete in the National Football League (NFL) as a member club of the league's National Football Conference (NFC) North Division. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago_Bears)

[4] Each team sport that conducts a conference schedule selects a first, second, and honorable mention all-conference team. (https://static.gomacsports.com/custompages/FactBooks/All-Conference%20Recognition.pdf)

Lamont: No, but we were in a conference. I think we tied one game, and we got a fair amount of publicity, primarily out of the Jacksonville papers, got a little bit out of Springfield, but that was it. We had a good team. Most of us all started playing when we were sophomores, starting. So we able to have the team together for all three years and had some pretty good athletes on that team.

DePue: You said you got some recognition as playing football?

Lamont: Well, Little All-State Honorable Mention.

DePue: Little All State?

Lamont: I think they, at that time, had two divisions of big schools and little schools, however that was defined, I assume by population or class size. Yes.

DePue: From what you've told me, Virginia won the state championship in football.

Lamont: No, there was no state championships in those days.

DePue: Were you disappointed that you didn't have a chance to take on the other really good schools?

Lamont: Didn't know any better. You played to win your conference. The only thing going on then were basketball state championships. They did not have football championships. Now I believe I understand there were Chicago Catholic League and Chicago Public League championships, but there wasn't anything beyond that.

DePue: That's interesting. What were your favorite subjects in school?

Lamont: History. That's about it (both laugh), about my favorite subject…civics.

DePue: You mentioned you had the typical jobs of the time.

Lamont: Cut grass, but as got older, when I was about the age of fifteen… I was a big kid. I was always much bigger than anybody else, until about sixteen years old. I was a head taller and twenty pounds heavier. In fact, [when] I went into high school, I remember exactly what my physical was. I was five-ten, a 197 pounds, and I graduated at six foot, 190 pounds. So I trimmed up a little and grew a little taller.

We did the typical small agricultural town things. As you got older, your job opportunities were typically on farms. So we did everything from cut corn out of beans, which was popular at the time. For two years I was on a summer baling crew, where we bailed hay, and we put up hay , at two cents a bale, if you went both ways, meaning you loaded them on a truck, and you took them off the truck and put them in the barn or wherever. If you only went one way, you got a penny a bale. We thought that was the greatest thing that

had ever happened to us, because we might make $8 or $9 one day. That kept us in pizza and beer money… I mean coke money (both laugh). We were pretty straight kids, didn't do alcohol or anything like that in high school.

DePue: I would think the baling hay job was a great way to get ready for the fall football season.

Lamont: Yes. Yes, that how we trimmed and toughened up and any other odd jobs on farms. By that time, my dad was no longer a teacher. My dad left teaching by the time I was eight or nine years old. He was always in the ag business.

DePue: So you didn't have to him as an instructor?

Lamont: No, no, no. When we went back to Virginia, we bought the little hardware store on the town square. It was a county seat with a square and a courthouse in the middle. He and my mother and me, when I couldn't get out of it, worked in that hardware store, all through high school.

DePue: Come home from school and go to work or mainly in the summertime?

Lamont: I always had some type of sport's practice after school, always. Maybe that was to avoid having to go up to that darn hardware store (DePue laughs) but, I worked there on Saturdays.

DePue: You mentioned your mom always made the games. Was your dad able to get to the games too?

Lamont: Dad always made my high school games. He never made any games that, if I was on… I was on an eighth grade team, down in West Frankfort, things like that. But those were usually right after school games. It'd be a 3:30 game or something, and dad worked. In fact, nobody came to those games. My mom was probably doing odd jobs and working at the time as well. But in high school, oh no, they were typical [of a] kid's family; they'd show up at the games.

DePue: You mentioned that you liked history in high school.

Lamont: I did.

DePue: The most important historic event at the time when you were in high school would be John F. Kennedy's assassination.

Lamont: It was.

DePue: What do you remember about that day?

Lamont: I remember being in my history class and the principal knocking on the door. [He] walked in and announced to the teacher what had happened, and she

started crying. We're going, what's going on? The announcement was that Kennedy had been shot. I don't know that they said Kennedy had died, yet.

She was quite a historian and was a little bit of influence on my life. Her brother was involved in the political life and worked with Adlai Stevenson, the son, Adlai Stevenson, who ended up becoming a U. S. Senator and [her brother] followed him to Washington. He was a key member of Stevenson's staff. So, my history teacher was highly interested in political life as well.

Her other claim to fame—she was unmarried, had never been married—she was the head of the Cass County Genealogical Society. Every junior in high school had her history class, and we all had to do our genealogies, which I did with the help of my grandparents at the time, which sparked a bit of an interest to me, which I've carried through my life.

As an aside, many years later, knowing now that the Lamonts or Lamant—I'm not sure how it's pronounced in Scotland—originated in Scotland. We have our own clan, Clan Lamant or Clan Lamont. My first trip to Europe my wife and I took, we went to England and then to Scotland. I'm in Edinburgh, Scotland, tracking down some of my genealogy, and I ran into my high school history teacher. I had not seen her since I'd graduated from high school. This was at least through seven years of college and a couple of years of working before I could go to Europe. I ran into her at Edinburgh, Scotland.

DePue: Talk about a small world.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: Did she remember you?

Lamont: Absolutely!

DePue: Because you were just a memorable character growing up in high school?

Lamont: I had… I visited her. I can't recall if I visited her shortly after that or somewhat before. I think it was shortly after that because, once I saw her, I visited her at her home. Of course, she was retired by then.

DePue: Did your family talk politics around the dinner table, anything like that?

Lamont: Not really.

DePue: Do you know where your parents were on the political spectrum?

Lamont: Yes. I would say my father was a Democrat. My mother was not anything in particular, but I know her parents' background were Republican. But [I] seldom ever heard any real discussion around the dinner table.

DePue: What did you want to do with your life when you were in high school?

Lamont: I don't know. (DePue laughs) I didn't have a lot of plans. If I was asked at that time, I'd say, "Well, I'm going to be a chemical engineer". How I came up with that, I have no idea.

DePue: You said you liked history...

Lamont: Right.

DePue: …pretty much nothing else. Did you do well in the sciences and math?

Lamont: I did okay. I did well in high school, pretty much, regardless of course, but those weren't my favorites. My history teacher, who started me on my genealogy, took me aside one day and said, "You need to be a lawyer. I think that's what you are inclined… I think, with your background and your interest, I think I would strongly encourage you to consider being a lawyer."

DePue: We better get her name down; what was her name?

Lamont: Name was Marjory Taylor, T-a-y-l-o-r. That was a Marjory with a j.

DePue: What did she see in young Tom Lamont to make her think that you could be a lawyer?

Lamont: No idea, unless we had side bar conversations on politics or something. I don't really recall.

DePue: Did you talk up in class occasionally, ask a lot of questions?

Lamont: I was never shy.

DePue: Argue some issues with other students?

Lamont: No. She taught a civics class too, which… Another name for that anymore is poly science, political science. Maybe she detected some interest there. Anyway, when I graduated then from high school and had to declare a major in college, I declared pre-law, which of course, the school I was attending, and I attended Illinois State University for lots of different reasons, none of which was academic-oriented. They had no pre-law, as such.

So I went to a counselor, and he says, "Looking up in the books, it says you would be wise to take a lot of history and political science courses. So why don't you become a comprehensive social science major?" meaning

you didn't have a minor, so you doubled up those kind of courses. I said, "Hey, okay. That's what my counselor tells me." So I did. Because I had gotten a scholarship, a teaching scholarship, I had to take some teacher ed courses. The scholarship paid for my tuition and my books.

Kind of backing up, I graduated in 1965. We're really pushing into [the] Vietnam War. It was very evident then that my classmates, those who didn't go to college, were going to be drafted, and those who went to college were going be drafted right after college. Since my father and my grandfather had been teachers, I thought it might be something to fall back on, if I never made it to law school before I was drafted and elected never to go back to law school. So, I didn't mind taking a teacher curriculum, which I did.

DePue: Why Illinois State?

Lamont: I was always going to go to the University of Illinois, where my father had gone and the only other sports team outside of the St. Louis Cardinals who I followed was either the local schools, my high school, my brother's school or Illinois, the University of Illinois, and their sports programs. I was always going to Illinois, until I met a girl. The girl went to Illinois State, and she was...

DePue: A lot of stories goes this way.

Lamont: She was older than I. She was a year ahead of me, but in a small town high school you could get away with dating a girl in the class above you.

DePue: Was she in the same school?

Lamont: Yes. So I followed her to Illinois State.

DePue: What was her name?

Lamont: Her name was Becky Calhoun, C-a-l-h-o-u-n.

DePue: Now, I don't want to jump ahead too far, but is Becky going to factor into your story later on?

Lamont: Not really. Becky transfers (both laugh) after a year.

DePue: And you didn't?

Lamont: And I didn't.

DePue: So you got a scholarship. I assume they didn't pay all the costs of school?

Lamont: No, paid no housing or anything like that. Tuition at that time was reasonably minimal; I want to $600, $700 or $800, literally. And books might $35 or $40. But, relatively, that was money.

DePue: I don't think Illinois State had ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] program, so that wasn't a factor.

Lamont: No, they did not.

DePue: Did you join a fraternity while you were there?

Lamont: They did not allow fraternities at the time, but they had co-ops, cooperatives, which was our excuse for a fraternity. We just didn't have national organization. After living in a dorm my freshman year, I joined a coop of sixteen or seventeen other boys and with one graduate student. It was a small house off campus. [I] stayed there through the rest of my college, although we moved to a bigger house at one time.

We all got together, and some of the folks in our co-op, their fathers were able to raise some money, and we bought a much larger house and ended up with like twenty-eight, twenty-nine guys in there. But somehow, somebody's father was a lawyer, and they formed a little corporation and owned the house.

DePue: Calling it a co-op makes it sound like it was somewhat sanctioned by the university?

Lamont: There was several of them. It was, in essence, a fraternity system without national recognition. Something was in some land charter at ISU that [was] written up and prohibited fraternities and sororities. We, then, sued them, threatened to sue them, my senior year.

As I recall, we had a friendly lawyer helping us out. We said, "You can't tell us that we can't organize where we want to organize." They, of course, being the college administration, put a study group together, knowing they couldn't win the darn thing and stalled it for a year but then opened the door, as I'm on my way out graduating.

That spring, we then talked to any number of national fraternal organizations to see if they were interested in us. Several of the more prominent and well known fraternities were not because we didn't have…the school did not have a history of fraternities, and many of them did not want to be the first, I guess, for whatever reason.

The school, being located in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois, we talked to some of our friends at Illinois Wesleyan. Illinois Wesleyan University is a Bloomington school, which had fraternities. There was a beautiful fraternity house, Tau Kappa Epsilon, the TKEs. The TKEs, being at that time, I think,

the largest or second largest fraternity in the country in number of chapters, originated in Bloomington, Illinois. The TKE symbol and pin—back when fraternities when had pins—was a TKE triangle. That triangle symbolized the first three chapters of the TKE organization, which was Illinois Wesleyan, University of Illinois, and…What's the one in Decatur?

DePue: Millikin?

Lamont: Millikin University. That's the TKE triangle. They ended up with like, I don't know, 500 chapters or 800. I don't know, how ever many. Working with them, we eventually became the TKE Fraternity. I had graduated. That happened the summer of my graduation. I came back that fall to be sworn in—even though I was in law school at the time at the University of Illinois—into the TKE Fraternity. But I never had much to do with them after that. And they, of course, were eventually kicked off campus (both laugh).

DePue: For misbehaving?

Lamont: A little bit of it. I don't know what all, but we were… It sort of became a jock house, shall I say.

DePue: Maybe they were too influenced by *Animal House* that came out a few years later, after you'd left?[5]

Lamont: I think *Animal House* may have grown out of…(both laugh) They were the Delta House of ISU at one time, yes.

DePue: But certainly they were well behaved while you were there?

Lamont: Absolutely.

DePue: Did you play sports?

Lamont: At ISU? I did not, I played the student sports.

DePue: Intramural sports.

Lamont: Intramurals. I did play freshman year football. I had a good friend who convinced me to go out for spring ball as a freshman, spring football. I realized right away, it wasn't for me. I neither had the size or the speed at that level, nor really the desire. But it was good exercise for me for about six weeks.

[5] *National Lampoon's Animal House* is a 1978 American comedy film about a misfit group of fraternity members who challenge the authority of the dean of Faber College. It garnered an estimated gross of more than $142 million, making it the highest grossing comedy film of its time. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_House)

DePue: Did you continue to work in your dad's store or pick up summer jobs?

Lamont: I did during breaks. In the summer, though, we wanted full-time jobs. He didn't need a full-time kid working in there. So I either did my farm jobs or eventually was able to get hired at Anderson Clayton in Jacksonville, Illinois, which made margarine, cooking oils and salad dressings. I was on the first line to ever make soft butter, soft margarine, instead of sticks.

That was interesting (both laugh) because half the time the engineering didn't work. It would come in cups that would…and the margarine hadn't set very well. It couldn't go through if it had been lumped to one side, so it wouldn't harden right; it would look ugly, couldn't open it, or the cups were crushed, bent somehow because they were some cheap plastic.

There was a lot of shenanigans, as you might think, with lots of kids my age. You'd recycle that margarine by throwing it in a fifty-gallon oil drum. If one was crushed or bad, you'd throw it. Of course, you always tried to hit the edge, so it would splatter on the kids behind it, since a lot of them were just like me, college kids. I did that.

Actually, I did that at the end of my high school. I kind of fibbed the first time I got the job and said I was eighteen, but I was sort of only seventeen. My brother was working there at the time, and his summer vacations, [he] got me in. But then, when football season started, my team picture and name showed up in the paper. The following Easter break, I sought out the work, the week or two we're off. They had seen, (both laugh) had read the paper, but let me work anyway. We adjusted my work records by then.

DePue: As scandals go, that's a pretty minor one, I'd say.

Lamont: And in college I worked on the highway. I worked for DOT [Department of Transportation]. I got a summer job working on the road constructions for the State of Illinois. Those jobs weren't political; well, if they were, I didn't know anything about it. Yeah, I worked on the roads.

DePue: Did you take a lot of history, a lot of political science?

Lamont: Yeah.

DePue: Were you happy with that choice?

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: Did the whole notion of becoming a lawyer grow on you over those four years?

Lamont: I didn't waiver. I knew where I was going the whole time. I didn't rethink of what I was doing. I didn't reconsider at all; no, I was pretty determined. I had a goal, and I was going there.

DePue: So, Mrs. Taylor knew what she was doing when she suggested that?

Lamont: It obviously struck a nerve of some type, and I was able to focus and go from there.

DePue: Speaking of focusing, you're there from sixty-five to sixty-nine...

Lamont: Correct.

DePue: There was a lot going on in the United States in those years.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: Let me ask you where were you at with the Civil Rights Movement, whether or not you were paying attention to it, whether or not you had any personal involvement or feelings about it?

Lamont: I was not involved in any of it. [I was] a very traditional, downstate college student at a pretty conservative school. A school at that time was either, maybe 20, 25 percent Chicago oriented kids; the rest of the student population was just like me, more or less central Illinois. We had modest demonstrations at the time that I recall and discussions in class, although the war discussions did not take place until later in my college years, maybe as a senior. To my knowledge, there was modest drug situation. We were the typical, beer student type. We just didn't get involved in a lot of that stuff.

DePue: The next questions is about Vietnam. It was really heating up by the time you get to sixty-seven and especially sixty-eight. Were your views on the Vietnam War changing during that time or solidifying?

Lamont: I had a brother there at the time. As I said, soon as he graduated from dental school, he went right in. In fact, he'd already joined up to go in right after graduation. I visited him one Christmas vacation when he was stationed at Fort Carson, Colorado in his first six, seven months of just getting adjusted to the military, going through the typical military schools you have to do and then doing his advanced military training as a dentist. Then he was sent to Vietnam. I followed him pretty closely.

As things heated up, particularly in sixty-eight, my roommate in the fraternity house—we had a bunk bed, and he was a year older than me—several of us were very interested in what was going on in the war. I was always, even growing up, very interested in playing soldier, Army, all that. So, I was really interested in what was going on.

Also, prior to that time, I want to say in the New Year's Eve truce of 1966, meaning December 1966, [I was] home on Christmas vacation. One of my best friends and classmates in high school, who had dropped out of college and gone into the Army, we found out on New Year's Eve that he was killed. We all had, typical [of] freshman or sophomore at that time, a New Year's Eve college party getting ready in our hometown, where we were all going to get together. It was all a matter of all talking about Terry and what had happened and very sad occasion, for all of us. It was not a good thing for us.

Shortly after that, I was asked to be a pallbearer at his funeral. I'd never been to a funeral of any type. So this was the first funeral I attended, as a pallbearer, and I just… His death was one of the first ones in the area, and I recall the picture of us bringing the casket out of the church, walking down the steps, appearing in… I want to say in the Jacksonville paper or the Springfield paper. I have that clip somewhere.

I was always, from then on, pretty attuned to what was going on and followed it closely, even though we weren't involved in anything other than discussions over beers and things like that with my fraternity brothers. Going up now, to sixty-eight, my one fraternity roommate, when we would have dinner, we would grab our food and plates and take it in to see and watch the news, to see what had happened during the war. That was common for us to do that, instead of eating in our little dining room at the fraternity house.

To take that one step further, he graduated a year ahead of me. He had a little different life than some of us. He was a president of our fraternity house, and he'd been a leader in getting our ability to purchase our own house and was a philosophy major. We had many, many talks.

I'll tell you some stories. In our first co-op years, we actually followed the rules. That was no drinking (both laugh) in the fraternity house. But we had a parking lot out behind the house, in the alley. We would sit in our cars and have a cocktail every now and then, you know, beer—we all drank beer—and listen to music and solve the world's problems.

DePue: Listen to rock and roll.

Lamont: And talk about events of the day, never with women, because back then women had hours. You had to take the women home after your dates. They had to be in their dorms by a certain amount of time. Then we would all congregate back at the house in our cars in the back, drinking a little beer and solving the world's problems. I didn't acquire the taste for beer until (laughs) about my sophomore year in college.

Anyway, so time progresses. My roommate graduates a year ahead of time, and he graduates—I'm skipping some things here—and goes off and, of course, is drafted. But he just happens to be on leave the next year, when it'd

be my senior year. He's now been out since the previous June, and he's getting orders for Vietnam. He's already in the Army. But he's on leave, so he came home to homecoming. This would have been 1969…No, it would have been the fall of sixty-eight, yeah. He said, "I'm getting my orders soon, and I'll be going to Vietnam," okay?

By now we no longer have hours, but we all take our dates home. He had a girlfriend that was still in school. We all took our dates home at regular time, and we're all now twenty-one or twenty-two. So we can go anywhere and drink. We've moved out of the old house and into a new house, a year or so before this guy left.

DePue: Was the drinking age twenty-one at the time?

Lamont: Yes. But we buy a couple of six packs, and we went back to our old co-op. We didn't even go to the fraternity house. We went back and sat in the alley where we used to sit three or four years previously. It was now another student housing. We didn't care. We didn't go to a bar. We went back to the co-op and sat in the parking lot as he told us he was going and had feared very much that he wasn't coming back. He wanted to be with us before he left. Then he was killed about six months later. So (voice breaking) it all had an impact on us.

DePue: But up to this point, you've been careful not to express what your personal views were about the war.

Lamont: I was supportive because I thought we were doing the right thing. What did I know? Certainly I was going to be supportive with my brother over there. I think we were all… Most of us were supportive at that time. But as the years progressed, and it looked like a never-ending war, and more and more people questioned what was our end game here? What were we going to get out of this? And was it worth losing the kids that we were losing to war? It was a dominate factor in everybody's life, if you're under the age of thirty.

But I was supportive, probably until sixty-eight, sixty-nine, when things started to… Then I had some discussions with my father, who, as you might think, was very supportive of the war. I had some questions growing at that time, particularly in the following years, seventy, seventy-one, seventy-two.

DePue: So you and your father got to live out whole discussion about the generation gap?

Lamont: Oh yeah. My brother was back by then, and he was not a strong believer in the war after what he believed he observed, where he didn't believe, as I recall, that the people were all that much…the people of Vietnam were as supportive as they should have been. He also felt that it was unwinnable, when he came back. So the two of us had our discussions with my dad, at the time.

DePue: Did you have discussions in your history or political science classes about it?

Lamont: I recall very little of that, to tell you the truth. I'm sure we did, but I don't recall very much at all.

DePue: I always like to ask people about their memories of 1968. In sixty-seven the anti-war movement was really building up, the student protests on lot of other campuses; I'm sure you're hearing about some of those. But then, sixty-eight, starts with the *U.S.S. Pueblo* being captured.[6] Then, right at the end of the month is the Tet Offensive.[7]

Lamont: We were all trying to figure out if we were going to join up right afterwards, and some of us felt we should.

DePue: After hearing about the Tet Offensive?

Lamont: No, as we progress into the war. We weren't thinking of avoiding the draft. We were thinking it's our patriotic duty to go to war. Whereas kids can see it more as an adventure and something you should do, we did. And ,as I said, I always grew playing soldier and things like that. I was inclined to do that. My brother talked me out of it.

I'll tell you an interesting aside with regard to the war and what started to expand my horizons a little bit. The roommate I mentioned, who graduated a year ahead of me in the summer of 1968, he and two other guys knock on my door in Virginia, Illinois one day in July… I don't know, August, July or August of 1968. And another one of my housemates, who also had graduated in 1968, they were on their way to California, where the parents of the one gentleman had moved. Then my roommate, Tim—the one who was later killed—he was taking his vacation before the draft. So, they're all driving to California.

They stopped and said, could I come with them? I'm working as best I can, but my mother thought that was a good idea, that I should go. I'd worked most of the summer, so it had to be late summer. But I couldn't go with them

[6] The *USS Pueblo*, a Navy intelligence ship, and its 83 crewmen were capture by North Korean patrol boats off the coast of North Korea on Jan. 23, 1968. Maintaining that the *Pueblo* had been in international waters, the United States began a military buildup in the area and initiated negotiations, resulting in an agreement that secured the release of the 82 surviving crewmen on Dec. 23, 1968. The agreement allowed the U.S. to publicly disavow the confession the crew had signed. A naval inquiry into these confessions and the actions of Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher produced no apparent disciplinary action. (https://www.britannica.com/event/Pueblo-Incident)

[7] The Tet Offensive was one of the largest military campaigns of the Vietnam War, launched against the forces of the South Vietnamese Army and the United States Armed Forces and their allies on January 30, 1968 by forces of the Viet Cong and the People's Army of Vietnam. It was a campaign of surprise attacks against military and civilian command and control centers throughout South Vietnam. Tet is the name of the holiday, the Vietnamese New Year, when the first major attacks took place. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tet_Offensive)

right at that time because my mother said, "You can fly out and meet them in California." I'd never been on a plane. We'd figure out a way.

They took off on their great adventure, and then I was going to meet them. And [by that] time I finished up my work and made all the plans. So I did. But I had to take a bus or a train to Chicago to catch a plane. At the airport there… I can't remember if we flew out of Springfield to Chicago. In any event, I ended up at O'Hare, just as the Democratic Convention 1968 was going on.

I'm getting off the plane, and I see plane loads of soldiers, also getting off planes, literally. I said, "This is going to be great." I wasn't tuned into that very much, but it was interesting. So I fly to Sacramento. My mother gave me $50. This is a big deal; she gave me $50, and I probably another $25 or $35. It was all I had. I wasn't going to spend money; I had to go to college. I didn't take cash. I think I had maybe $40 in traveler's checks, which is what you did back then.

I flew to Sacramento, where this other gentleman's parents had moved, and I met these guys. There was actually a fourth. So the four of us then took off from Sacramento. We went down to San Francisco, the first place. We are kids right out of, *Leave it to Beaver*.[8] Everyone's recruiting in Haight Ashbury to go to the convention in Chicago.[9]

We never saw, really, long-haired people before, hardly. This is still relatively new; I'm serious, people with beads on them. I have a great picture of the street signs, Haight Ashbury, as we drove through. They literally had card tables set up for people to sign up and get on buses to go to Chicago. But we were on the move, so we only stayed one night there. We just meandered down the coast for five or six days.

DePue: You remember the chant from the Democratic Convention?

Lamont: Oh, there's probably several that were...

DePue: The one that really sticks in my mind...

[8] *Leave It to Beaver* is an American television sitcom about an inquisitive and often naive boy, Beaver Cleaver, and his adventures at home, school, and around his suburban neighborhood. The show attained iconic status in the United States, with the Cleavers exemplifying the idealized suburban family of the mid-20th century. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leave_It_to_Beaver)

[9] The Haight-Ashbury district is noted for its role as a center of the 1960s hippie movement. The earlier bohemians of the beat movement had congregated around this San Francisco North Beach neighborhood from the late 1950s. The 1967 "Summer of Love," the 1960s era as a whole, and much of modern American counterculture have been synonymous with San Francisco and the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood ever since. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haight-Ashbury)

Lamont: Hell, no we won't go.

DePue: Yeah. The whole world's watching.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: The whole world's watching, except you and your buddies are...

Lamont: Right. We're catching it only piece meal (DePue laughs) because one, we can't afford hotels; most of the time we're camping out. On [the] rare occasion we decided we had to have a shower, we'd rent one room and pull the mattress off. Two people slept on the springs or slept on the mattress or on the floor. Anyway, we wondered around for about a week and then… Something was going on; I needed to get back, call home. Whatever it was, I needed to get back. So I broke off with them. We gone down, actually down and run into Mexico and came up to San Antonio, Texas after about six days, I said, "I need to go back." Okay, they were going on.

So I went to a store and bought a big piece of white cardboard and a magic marker and wrote "Student to Illinois" or "Student to Midwest" or something. They put me out on a freeway, some four-lane highway, an exit going right onto the highway, with a two-suiter, hardback suitcase—which is all you had back in those days—and my sign, saying "Student to Midwest," or whatever; I don't know. "See yah later," and that was it. That's where I'm at.

I never hitchhiked a day in my life, but I'm hitchhiking now. I don't have any money to get back, or I wouldn't dare spend it, waste it on buying transportation of any type. I wait and I wait, and every car's going by about 100 miles an hour. But I am right off the exit, so there a little bit slower before they hit that.

A car finally pulls over, and it turned out to be a young boy, a young teenager, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen. "Where you headed?" I'd gotten a map, and I said, "Well, I'm going to try to get to Oklahoma City. I think I have to go through Dallas to get to Oklahoma City, and [from] Oklahoma City, I'm going to go into St. Louis." He said, "I'm going up to Waco," which is about sixty miles away or wherever it was. Actually it may have been longer than that. "You're welcome to ride along to there." "Hey, great."

I got in his car, and we took off. We had a nice conversation. All I recall is his parents were divorced, and he'd come down to see his mother. He was going back or going to see his father in Waco, Texas. We end up going to his **house** for whatever. He says, "You might as well come to the house." Went to his house, and dad gave us each a beer (DePue laughs). then he took me out on the highway, where he thought would be a good place for me to get picked up.

But it's getting dark, now. I know I'm making this too long a story, but anyway… In about an hour or so I get picked up by a guy on a motorcycle. He pulls over. This isn't working; I got a suitcase (DePue laughs). He motions at me, and I'm like, "Me?" He said, "Yeah, come on." He had some nylon, little stretchy thing, to hook my suitcase on the back. He gave me his helmet, and away we went. He had told me, "I'm going to X." All I wanted to do was keep traveling. I didn't want any stoppage, and it's dark.

We travel. We go through Dallas, and then we're outside. I don't know, we rode for about an hour or so, and we're out in the middle of nowhere. By now, it's midnight, 1:00. I said, "This is not going to be real good." He told me where he's going, and then we start to pull off. I thought, Hmm. We pull off under an underpass, and he said, "Well, I need to go to the bathroom." I said, "Okay," which he does. And then, from under his seat, he pulls out a bottle of whiskey, which was a fifth, with just about an inch and a half left in it. I realize the guy's bombed the whole time (DePue laughs), shared it with me (both laugh), and we took off again.

Finally got to the exit, where he would go. But we're on an interstate and exits were four or five miles away from the town. He drops me on the interstate; there's nothing there. I'm thinking, it's 1:00 in the morning, we're all going to die, meaning me, right here. I'm going to be here all night. I'm by myself. I look up ahead, and I see some flashing red lights. I think, Hmm, I think that must be a truck alongside of the road.

Twenty minutes later, I walk up to this truck; it's an eighteen-wheeler. There's nobody there. I thought, Hmm, well he must be coming back, not going to abandon this truck here with the lights flashing. He must have had an issue. I wait; about a half hour later, another big truck pulls up. He's got the driver. They get out, pay no attention to me, don't even acknowledge my existence and proceed to work on that truck. Half hour later, the guy gets back in his other truck takes off, and the driver of the truck I'm with looks over at me; he said, "You need a ride? I can take you up the road a little bit." I said, "I'm in."

DePue: What is it, like 2:00 in the morning by this time?

Lamont: Yes. Yes and I can't stay awake because I've been up most of the night and the night before, from whatever we were doing. By the way, in the meantime, I'd switched my sign from "Student to Illinois." I switched it to "Veteran to Midwest," because nobody was picking up a student at that time. Students were not what you're supposed to be doing, certainly not down in Texas. So I flipped the other side; now I was a veteran to Midwest.

This guy talked all night long and decided I was okay because we kept going. He took me all the way to Oklahoma, including buying me breakfast at some truck stop. So that was great. That was only my second ride, and I'm

already in Oklahoma now, Oklahoma City, where he drops me and tells me a good place to wait, again an entrance onto a highway.

It wasn't a half an hour, and I was picked up by a guy heading to Chicago, with everything he owned in the car. He's a Mexican, and he's heading to Chicago. He could barely speak English, and I couldn't speak any Spanish, so he took me all the way to Springfield, Illinois. Three rides, one was a motorcycle. It was great.

DePue: Halleluiah.

Lamont: [It] took me three more rides to get to Virginia (both laugh) from Springfield.

DePue: Did you get another meal or two in there, in between, with the guy who took you to Springfield?

Lamont: I think a gas station type of thing, where we'd stop, and I gave my… I remember giving the last driver, the Mexican, $3 or $4 for gas. That was it.

DePue: You guys are driving all through the night and into the next day, then?

Lamont: Well, the truck driver took me all through the night. We ended up in Oklahoma the next morning sometime. That was my big adventure.

DePue: (laughing) And in the meantime...

Lamont: Never to hitch hike again in my life!

DePue: And meantime, Chicago is going crazy.

Lamont: Right, and I don't have any idea really what's going on, then, because I'm out of the news and don't have newspapers. I rarely recall hearing anything about it at that time.

DePue: I want to back you up a little bit here. Earlier in 1968, April 4 is the day Martin Luther King is assassinated. I would think people at Illinois State are paying attention to that one.

Lamont: What day was that?

DePue: April 4.

Lamont: Okay. I do recall something, some of that. I want to say it was over Easter break. I may be missing something. But I had another summer job, which was with the Illinois Correctional Department that, in New Salem, at that time, they had a boys' juvenile detention center on the edge of town—whether you knew that or not—where they kept about thirty, forty juveniles before they

turned twenty-one. There were some eighteen-year-olds in there. I worked there one summer.

I want to say, I was working back there during Easter, and I want to say, the assassination took place then because most of the kids were black from Chicago. My camp director… We took care of New Salem, is what we did. We were the maintenance people, the garbage collectors and all that. I would take a team of five or six out, and we'd do whatever we had to do. I'd be in charge of whatever my five or six kids were. These were Black Stone Rangers, gang members; these were some tough kids. Either my memory is bad, and maybe I'm confusing it later with Bobby Kennedy, but I'm pretty sure it was Martin Luther King, because I remember the camp director—who was also black—got everybody together to talk to us, talk to them about what had taken place. Again, I may be confusing it with the Bobby Kennedy assassination, but I don't think so.[10]

DePue: That was June 6, so that would be in the summer.

Lamont: I don't recall, frankly.

DePue: Of course, right after the assassination, a lot of cities across the country exploded in violence...

Lamont: Oh yeah.

DePue: …especially in Chicago.

Lamont: All right. I remember [riots in] Detroit; I remember [riots in] Chicago, and I remember the National Guard being called out in Chicago. I don't have very specific memories of it, quite frankly.

DePue: You probably weren't of voting age at the time, because the voting age then was twenty-one.

Lamont: I may have just turned twenty-one. I think that was the first time. I turned twenty-one in 1968, March of 1968. So I would have voted that fall.

DePue: Who were you supporting for president?

Lamont: It would have been [Vice President] Lyndon Johnson [Democrat], I assume.

[10] On June 5, 1968, presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy was mortally wounded shortly after midnight at a hotel in Los Angeles. Earlier that evening, the 42-year-old junior senator from New York was declared the winner in the South Dakota and California presidential primaries in the 1968 election. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassination_of_Robert_F._Kennedy)

DePue: Until Lyndon Johnson, in March, bowed out of the race and surprised everybody, which is why there was such a contested Democratic primary that year.

Lamont: Was it Humphrey?[11]

DePue: Humphrey was the one who emerged out of that chaotic Democratic Convention.

Lamont: Then I would have supported Humphrey.

DePue: Not Nixon?

Lamont: No.

DePue: How would you describe your politics at that time?

Lamont: Student liberal. That's probably going a little far because I'm still a downstate Midwesterner, liberal in a conservative context. I would say I was mostly a conservative Democrat, if there is such a thing. But I'm still a student, so put it all in perspective.

DePue: Did you say you needed to stop around 3:00 today?

Lamont: I should stop sometime. I can go another fifteen, twenty minutes if you want.

DePue: Let's get you into law school then.

Lamont: Alright.

DePue: That starts in sixty-nine.

Lamont: Yes, graduated in June of sixty-nine. My draft status was 1A, within ten days, had my physical within thirty days and ready to go, but I was admitted into law school. I think we started before Labor Day. For whatever reason, the law school had a little bit different schedule than the rest of the university at University of Illinois.

DePue: Was the University of Illinois your first choice?

Lamont: Correct.

DePue: Any other choices?

Lamont: You're allowed to send your scores to three schools Somebody from the University of Iowa Law School had come over to ISU and advertised and

[11] Hubert Horatio Humphrey Jr. was the Democratic Party's nominee in the 1968 presidential election, losing to Republican nominee Richard Nixon. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hubert_Humphrey)

wanted to see perspective law students. I met with them, liked the guy, so I had my scores sent. But U of I was always my first choice. I sent my scores to Iowa; I sent my scores to Washington University. But I was an early admittee to U of I, so I never needed to do anything; I never bothered to apply to the others. I just had my scores, LSAT [Law School Admission Test] scores, sent to them.

DePue: How were you going to pay for law school?

Lamont: Struggle, whatever summer earnings I had. I worked in college as well. I had a little part-time job in college.

DePue: Did you live on campus?

Lamont: No. I forget how it… An old fraternity brother, again, who was a year ahead of me, was going to law school. I ended up rooming with him, and he had two others that came in there. So four of us lived together in a little apartment our freshman year in law school. One was a veterinary student; another guy was a freshman law student like me, and my former fraternity brother was a second year law student. So there were four of us in there.

DePue: If I remember correctly from our early conversation, one of these was the son of the ROTC...

Lamont: No, not the first year. That was second year. Second year… Let me back up. As I said, there was four of us the first year. That was the year where they changed how the draft was going to be imposed.

DePue: And the very first draft lottery was December 1, 1969.

Lamont: Correct. I think I may have told you in a previous conversation, there was another student from Cass County, Beardstown, Illinois, in my law school class. He and I were always talking because you get drafted through your county draft board. What we'd both done, when we became 1A you have thirty days to appeal your draft classification. We all had been educated as to how to do this to make sure you got into law school.

You wait twenty-nine days, and then you appeal, knowing your appeal is going to denied. But by then, we would have started our class in law school. We'd been told that, once you start and you get drafted, then you don't have to apply again; you're automatically readmitted. All we wanted to be able to do was see that we were automatically readmitted when we got out of the Army. We all believed we were going straight to the Army in 1969.

DePue: Just for clarification for somebody who doesn't understand the impact of that change in the draft law, this was doing away with things like student deferments.

Lamont: Yes, certainly for grad students and people like that. So, prior to December 1… By then we had, both of us, had our appeal denied, and we were 1A and eligible again. That came about, I want to say in mid-October, by the time the government got around to denying our appeal. So we called. He and I stood by the phones together, we called the county draft board. They advised that he was number one, and I was number two, and we'd get our notice in mid-December. We'd go in January call. I said, "That's all right; maybe we'll get through one semester."

Then came December 1. Many of us didn't really realize what all was going on until like a day or two before, when it's the student paper and everybody is saying, "Hey, things are just getting ready to change. We're going to have a draft lottery system." Holy moly! (DePue laughs) As we did every night, we're in the law school library studying, but it was to happen like at 8:00 at night, central time and televised. You could hear, about 7:45, all the books start to close.

We all went to a little student rec room, where we had a TV, a student lounge at the law school and watched, as they pulled the numbers. You'd hear the moanings and the screamings and/or the clapping, depending on whose number came up. My number was 213, which I really didn't know what meant, other than it probably it didn't mean I was going in January. They probably pro-longed me. Regardless of what your number was, 100 percent of the people went to the bars immediately after that was over, people screaming, crying, clapping, girlfriends hugging because one was going to get drafted… And one was my other freshman roommate. He had like number nine or something, so he was gone. That broke up our apartment house. The vet student went off with some of his vet students, and my freshman roommate went off to the Army (laughs).

Then we all thought, What are we going to do now? We're going to get drafted, but hey, do we have time to get in graduate school ROTC program? Hello, yes we do. The other gentleman from Cass County and myself, we went and joined graduate school ROTC, which requires you don't do anything until that summer, then you go to active duty for two summers. You start with boot camp. He went Air Force ROTC; I went Army ROTC. That was my introduction to the military.

DePue: So you went to boot camp?

Lamont: I went to book camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Then came back from law school. Now I have two law school roommates, one of which whose father was the colonel of ROTC at the University of Illinois. He was a lieutenant who'd already been through regular, undergraduate ROTC and was on leave to go to law school.

DePue: When you went to boot camp, did the drill instructors know your circumstances, that you weren't really drafted?

Lamont: My entire cadre was ROTC students. It was a regular Boot Camp for ROTC students, which made it a week or two shorter. My company was all ROTC.

DePue: Did they yell at you less or treat you worse?

Lamont: I don't know what relative standards were at the time (DePue laughs), but I would suggest they didn't yell any less (both laugh). My DI [Drill Instructor] had already been to Vietnam and was wounded. So he had his own idea about how the world worked. My company commander was a shaved head, twenty-eight, twenty-nine-year-old, thirty-year-old captain, who had been a military brat all his life and had already had orders to return to Vietnam. He was practicing (laughs) being a company commander during my whole ROTC period.

He was tough. He'd walk around and say, "Purge your ranks, men. Purge your ranks." "What do you mean?" "Turn in these slackers who aren't doing the right things" kind of thing. About the sixth week period, he and my DI got into it. Never saw the DI again. Did not have a DI (laughs) with us the last…We had a master sergeant who lived in our little barracks, which were WWII barracks at Fort Knox, but he was not our DI. But he kept things under control.

By the sixth or seventh week, we had a pretty good idea of what was going on and knew how to put the uniform on and jumped out our… We had three steps, and you had to yell… What did we yell? Whatever the paratroop thing was, yelling when you jumped out of a plane. We had to yell something, "Death from above" or something. And [we were] not allowed to walk, of course, in the company area; you had to run the whole time. A lot of our marching cadence was (singing), "I'm going to go to Vietnam. I'm going to kill a Charlie Cong, one, two three," the usual kind of thing.

DePue: The old standard Jody calls too, probably.[12]

Lamont: I had, in my platoon… I want to say there was thirty-one in my platoon, something like that. There were eighteen Mormons (DePue laughs), including my bunkmate was a Mormon. That was different, not knowing about Mormons, but they could do some underneath uniform adjustments. They certainly were not anti-war. Many of them were older; they'd already done

[12] A Jody call or Jody is a traditional military cadence or cadence call-and-response work song, sung by military personnel while running or marching. It's named after Jody, a recurring character, with whom a serviceman's wife/girlfriend cheats, while he is deployed. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_cadence)

their year or two in Mormon missions, not all of them; I don't think all of them. But otherwise it was pretty much standard boot camp

DePue: I was just thinking; you went to Fort Knox, home of the armor school, that might have been where your dad ended up starting his military career.

Lamont: I actually think it was. The first night there, you have no idea; you're, What am I going to do here? Here I am in this desolate place; it's July; it's 100 degrees outside, no air conditioning. Our windows are propped open with butt cans. By that, I mean cigarette butt cans. There were night firing exercises going on all night long. I'm hearing machine guns and tanks going off. I remember the next day asking my DI, since I didn't sleep half the night, I said, "Who won?" "What are you talking about?" I said, "Who won the war? There obviously a war going on last night (both laugh), all night long." He didn't think that was funny.

DePue: I imagine not. He's getting you ready for the **real** war.

Lamont: Yes. "Shut up and get in line."

DePue: Then you go back to law school again, and it's a different kind of a structure and regimen you had to experience.

Lamont: Yes. To complete this early military aspect, you don't sign in to ROTC; you don't swear in to the service until you're back on campus. When I returned to campus, in the fall of 1970, they had announced they would stop the draft at 195. They had also announced—at least we knew at the law school—that nobody was going…You weren't going to be a JAG [Judge Advocate General] officer, meaning you weren't going to have a legal military lawyer position, because they were full of them. "So don't count on it" was what we were told. And "Oh my God, we have to be lawyers. We'll never be able to pass the bar if we go away for a couple of years," which was standard at the time.

So I asked my roommate's father, the colonel, Colonel Curran—who'd been an aid to Patton, by the way—as was the dean in law school. Both had been Patton's military aids. The dean started every class with a lecture that was about Patton. He was famous; he eventually became the president of the university, great guy, super guy.

DePue: What was his name?

Lamont: John Cribbet, great guy. [He] wrote the law books, did everything. Anyway, I asked Colonel Curran, and he said, "I don't blame you if you don't want to swear in. If we go over draft number 195, I'll swear you in late." In a way I wanted to go; in a way I didn't. I wanted to finish law school, but I wanted to be an Army lawyer.

Now I'm thinking [of the] future. I thought, I got to be able to pass that bar when I come back, because his son was going to the same thing. So he understood it a little bit more than others might. So I didn't swear in. I had no credit for that service, even though I got a great picture to my platoon, the A-17-5 right there, Alpha Company 17th Battalion, 5th Brigade. (DePue laughs) But nothing on my service records are going to show it.

DePue: What was your law school experience like?

Lamont: Dull.

DePue: None of those instructors were like in the classic film, *Paper Chase*?[13]

Lamont: There were a couple of them, yeah. My criminal law instructor had a similar situation, as I recall from the *Paper Chase*. We were in the Socratic method, particularly as freshman in classes of maybe 100. These were not small classes of… Your starting freshman classes. Yeah, because there were about 300 in our class. They doubled the size of the class, knowing that half of them were not going to be there at the end of the year.

DePue: Because of the draft?

Lamont: The draft, yeah.

DePue: How many women in your class?

Lamont: Very few, maybe five, six.

DePue: Any blacks?

Lamont: A few, not a lot, a few. But we had fair number of veterans. They were different (both laugh) because they had all come right back from Vietnam.

DePue: They were in a different frame of mind?

Lamont: They were in a different frame of mind, which led to lots of good discussions.

DePue: How so were they different?

Lamont: One, more mature; two, a lot of times they didn't care. They didn't like to put up with what might be seen as BS [bullshit], academic BS. They were of a couple of different frames of mind. Many of them were married, and they were serious, and they were going to screw the curve for the rest of us

[13] An American film, *The Paper Chase*, based on John Jay Osborn Jr.'s 1971 novel by the same name, tells the story of a first-year law student at Harvard Law School, his experiences with a brilliant and demanding contract law professor, and his relationship with the professor's daughter. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Paper_Chase_(film)

(laughs) because they studied all the time. They were just more mature. Some were just kind of going through the motions, but they were free spirits. But we had some good discussions in class.

I remember my criminal law instructor, Charles Bowman, who had written…helped write the Illinois criminal code, which we still use. He was no nonsense. One time, one gentleman was talking a little bit too loud in class, and he kicked him out, "You!" When Charlie spoke, everybody went "Ahh," because he might be calling on you. That's the way it was done in law school. (in a loud, commanding voice) "Mr. Lamont, what happened in Jones v. New York?" "Ah, ah, ah, ah." If you tried to fake it, if you didn't know what was going, if you hadn't briefed that case, you'd have to say, "Pass," and you never wanted to say, "pass," or you had to try to discuss the case. And just like in *Paper Chase*, you better not screw this up, or he's just going to ream you.

This kid was mumbling something, he… (loudly) "You! Get out of my class! Don't ever come back and talk in my class." One of these, "Here's a dime; go call your mother, and tell her you're coming home, because you're not going to make it in this school." We're all… "Oh my God, this is horrible." The kid graduated, by the way, and is a very successful lawyer… now. But yeah, there a couple of those experiences.

DePue: Sometimes it just...

Lamont: Dean Cribbet, C-r-i-b-b-e-t, was his name. Dean Cribbet. But that wasn't the criminal lawyer.

DePue: C-r-i-b...

Lamont: b-e-t. Who eventually became chancellor of the U of I, not president, chancellor of the University of Illinois.

DePue: For this other young man that got booted, that was a nice attention grabber for him, huh?

Lamont: Yes. I had my own experience in law school that really bothered me or really… I was scared to death of law school, as we all were, so we studied hard. We partied hard on weekends, but we studied hard. Every night, we're in the library; we didn't do it in our apartments because that wasn't the place to… We were book bums. Your usual freshman courses, everybody takes the same: crim [criminal] law, property law, procedure, criminal procedure, civil procedure, all the usual introductory things. We all exchanged notes. We'd do crib sheets. We'd do everything that you might anticipate to do well.

At the end of my first semester—I don't remember, first or second semester—I had a property law instructor by the name of Sheldon Plager. I'll never forget him. Nice enough guy, but I learned early on, most law

professors are…teach only as a means to do something else. They're all going to be forensic witnesses, write books, do other things. Teaching is a means to an end. They might teach two or three classes, period, for the semester. Sheldon Plager went on to be the dean of law school at the University of Indiana.

Anyway, you only have one test in law school, and that's the final. You don't do anything in between. So you're a little nervous going to that big boy; it's make it or break it. It was a property law course, and property law was taught by two people, Dean Cribbet or Sheldon Plager. Dean Cribbett had written the hornbook on Illinois property law. All of us got that, and that was a side book. It was not assigned to you, but you read it anyway. I remember the test. It's all big fact scenario, then you write ten pages on what should happen here and apply the law.

I remember doing it, and I think I'm doing well. I get my grades later on, and I did okay, Bs. It wasn't like normal grad school where you got an A or B. In law school, you got A, B, C, D, E. They didn't have an F; they had an E. I thought, There's that big a difference in law school? These were serious people.

DePue: And grades posted where everybody could see?

Lamont: We usually got them on postcards. You left a postcard, or they were posted by number. I don't really remember. Usually there's both. If you wanted to get them early, you put them on a postcard, because then you usually are going away on a break after finals, sort of going home for the summer.

I got—I shouldn't say this for the record—I got a D in property… What? I knew that course! I can't believe that! I'd never gotten a D in my life on anything, ever! I am shocked. So I go in and see the professor. I make an appointment. "Sir, what…" He gets my paper out. I'm looking at it, and I'm seeing where he's marked points off. I'm one point from a C. Believe me, back then you took a C, no problem. I'm saying, "You've marked me down three points for this here." He said, "Well, that's not the rule." I said, "That's the citation out of Dean Cribbett's hornbook." He said, "You may be right, but that's not the law; that's an exception to the law." I said, "And I put the exception down." Well, I wasn't winning this. (DePue laughs) "If I change **your** grade, I'll have everybody coming in here to change my grade." Oh, that's the way this is going to work, huh? I could have strangled him.

That turned my whole law school situation around. I never tried nearly as hard after that, except on certain courses. The whole thing is hokey, because you go your freshman year; you want to be the best; you want to be on law review and get selected for high honors and all that stuff. After that, I said, "I get; this is hokey. These guys, this is not their real job. Their real job is making money elsewhere. Teaching is just to credential themselves to be

forensic witnesses." So I learned the system; from then on, I'm just getting through.

DePue: Did you have a favorite area of law that you were studying?

Lamont: I liked constitutional law because then I'm getting in more of the history side. And I took as an elective, legislative law. I'm not sure that's the exact name of it, but… A guy by the name Professor Cohen, who had been the parliamentarian of the constitutional convention, Illinois Constitutional Convention, taught the course.

DePue: Let's see, you graduated in seventy-two, the constitution convention was going on in seventy, 1970.

Lamont: Right and he had been the parliamentarian, I'm told, of the constitutional convention. That was always the big thing. His name was… I want to say Sheldon Cohen; it wasn't. [It was] something Cohen, C-o-h-e-n. So I took his legislative course. The rest of law school, I did not care for.

DePue: Just something to endure?

Lamont: There's a lot of mundane… It was sort of like practicing law, which I never cared for (both laugh) very much, either. I enjoyed reading the law because [of] a lot of the fact situations. You read a case, and there's some very interesting cases out there, until you get into some really weird business law type cases, which you can't understand at all what they're talking about. I can understand criminal law case, and I can understand a property law case, and I can understand a personal injury case because there's good facts involved. I can understand a good divorce, which we call family law, things like that. But other than that, I never cared for it. I thought, Just get me out of here.

DePue: So, what did you want to do, once you got that law degree?

Lamont: I was going to go into government.

DePue: You knew that already?

Lamont: I think I did. On one of my summers, I worked in a law firm for somebody who was a state rep. or was running to be a state rep, yes, and became a state rep. Then he actually helped me over the next ten years.

DePue: Is that your home district?

Lamont: By then it was, yes. I was in Carlinville by then. I was in college, moving to Macoupin County.

DePue: Who was the representative you're talking about?

Lamont: Ken Boyle, B-o-y-l-e. He was like my mentor, all the way through becoming a trustee at the University of Illinois. I went straight from law school to Legislative Reference Bureau. So I was working at the reference bureau.

DePue: That's probably a good place for us to stop today and pick up your working career next time around. It's been fun hearing these stories and recollections.

Lamont: Well, it's kind of fun for me too, to remember some of this stuff or try to remember. I don't do a particularly good job remembering things much anymore.

DePue: I think you've done fine. Thank you very much.

Lamont: You're welcome.

(end of transcript #1)

Interview with Thomas Lamont

VRT-A-L-2018-004.02

Interview Date: February 13, 2018

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Tuesday, February 13, 2018. This is Mark DePue, and I am, once again, here for my second session with Tom Lamont, the former assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve affairs for President Barack Obama. Today we get to talk a lot about politics. You have graduated from law school; that's, sir, where we finished off last time. What I wanted to start with is a real quick reference to your personal life. I understand you married about the time you graduated from law school.

Lamont: I got married in my second year in law school, so I had one year left. [I] married a girl I met there, who was getting her Master's Degree in Library Science. We got married in August of 1971. She took a job with Champaign [Public] Library and helped me through my last year of law school, and that was that.

DePue: What was her maiden name?

Lamont: Her name was Bridget, B-r-i-d-g-e-t, Later, L-a-t-e-r, from Wilmette, Illinois.

DePue: B-r-i-d-g-e-t-t?

Lamont: One t, the Irish, Bridget, not Bridgette.

DePue: Tell me a little more about her.

Lamont: She had her own career when we came to Springfield. I'm not sure she was real excited about leaving the North Shore of Chicago, but [she] knew where I had hoped to practice and be involved in the political specter, which was Springfield. She took a job then with the [Illinois] State Library and over time, eventually, was named the state librarian under Jim Edgar, continued under George Ryan and held that position, I want to say twelve, fifteen years; I'm not precisely sure.

They built the new library, under her guidance or responsibility, working with Governor Edgar, at that time Secretary Edgar, who as secretary of state, was technically the official state librarian. But the professional who runs it [is] also known as the state librarian or director of the state library.

DePue: Was that in 1990 that the new library got…

Lamont: In that range, yes.

DePue: I know that Governor Edgar, then Secretary Edgar, was very proud of that building.

Lamont: Oh, he was and should be. He would say, it's under time and under budget and was distinctive, a different building than what Governor Thompson had built in Chicago. And he wanted a building—of course, I'm telling you this second hand, third hand—that would fit in the capitol area.

DePue: Everything you just said was consistent with exactly the way Governor Edgar described it, to include the little architectural rivalry he had with then Governor Thompson.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: How did you meet her?

Lamont: In law school, I had, my freshman year, a number of roommates. Four of us shared an apartment, one of which had attended school that was the sister or brother school of my wife's school, which was Clark College. This gentleman had to gone to Loras, and they all knew each other, because at that time, they were all man or all women Catholic schools.[14] So, he was one of my roommates, and over time he introduced me to Bridget because they were probably one of the few people who knew each other at the University of Illinois.

DePue: You finished, passed the bar exam in 1972, as I recall. So what happens after that for you?

Lamont: I was working. I had taken a job with the Illinois Legislative Reference Bureau, as I wanted to be involved in state government; that was my primary professional thoughts at that time. Went to work there, drafting legislation and got my first introduction to the Legislature.

DePue: I'm curious. You're drafting legislation, I assume, on the behalf of somebody. I mean, you're obviously...

Lamont: Sure.

DePue: How does that process work? Did legislators come and say, "We want you to write a bill on such and such, and here are the basic goals we have for the legislation"?

Lamont: Exactly, that's exactly what happens. Various members or members of the staff would come to us, but usually it would filter through the director of the Legislative Reference Bureau. Sometimes they would come to you directly, if they knew you, but otherwise, they went to our director, who would then disperse the work. They were six or seven of us doing this type of work.

He would assign us the project, or oftentimes they would bring in a copy of another state's legislation, and they would ask that we draw up something that would mirror that state legislation to conform to our own laws and state constitution, if there were any differences on that.

DePue: Were you working for specific committees?

Lamont: Not at time, no.

DePue: Were you working for one of the parties?

Lamont: No. We serve everybody. It was non-partisan.

[14] Loras College is a Catholic, liberal arts college in Dubuque, Iowa that offers liberal arts and pre-professional majors. (https://www.loras.edu/)

DePue: And this was the job you wanted to have, coming out of law school?

Lamont: Not necessarily, but it was a job that was open, (laughs) and it paid as well as any other opportunity in the private sector, typically more. So we were all excited about it.

DePue: From what you've expressed before, you wanted to be in administrative law, and that generally means you're going to steer away from being in a law firm or setting up your own practice.

Lamont: I didn't know that at the time, but my interest was not necessarily… I didn't care to be a trial lawyer; that had no interest for me. But I wanted exposure to the legislature, and this was a good introduction.

DePue: How would you describe your politics at that point in your life?

Lamont: Generic, if anything. I wouldn't call me a party man at that time. I assume my personal leanings were probably more along the Democratic lines, what I understood Democrats to stand for. But other than that, I wouldn't call myself necessarily one thing or another.

DePue: It's an interesting time in American history. It's the tail end or the draw down years of the Vietnam War, and once you're in there for a year or so, then you've got Watergate going on, as well.[15] Were you paying much attention to that?

Lamont: Watergate was taking place in the summer of seventy-two, when I'm working on the bar exam. I hadn't started a job yet. I was still living in Champaign, didn't move back here until the fall of seventy-two.

DePue: But as I understand, the drum beat of Watergate and all the investigations and the build-up really started after Nixon had been elected. So we're talking 1973, well into 1974, when he actually leaves office.

Lamont: Is that right? I don't even recall. But, sure, I followed it quite extensively, having an interest in the political side of things and in what happens in government in general.

DePue: Many have said that that led to a cynicism among the American public about politics in the United States. Did it have that effect on you?

[15] Watergate was a major American political scandal that lasted from 1972 to 1974, following a burglary by five men of the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate office complex in Washington D.C. on June 17, 1972, and President Richard Nixon's subsequent attempt to cover up his administration's involvement. The scandal led to the discovery of multiple abuses of power by members of the Nixon administration, the commencement of an impeachment process against the president and Nixon's resignation. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watergate_scandal)

Lamont: I don't recall that necessarily being the case.

DePue: Do you remember any specific legislation that you worked on that you're especially proud of?

Lamont: I remember probably [the] most important piece of legislation, but probably one of the easiest ones to draft. That was turn right on a red light (DePue laughs). The impact of that, in terms of economic savings and fuel savings, from everything I've read, is very, very considerable. But, in essence, this came out of the Council of State Governments' recommendation.[16]

There was an annual conference. Several states had adopted this [law], and next thing you know, we had a number—more than one—member[s] of the legislature who wanted to introduce that bill. So I drafted it, following the language other states' bills and adapting it to ours, which didn't require a great amount of effort.

DePue: So, Mr. Secretary, every time you turn right on red, you think about that?

Lamont: I have (both laugh) more than once, yes.

DePue: This is all right; I did that.

Lamont: I was involved in lots of other, much more complicated legislation, but I'm not sure any of it was meaningful or any of it passed. I remember very little about any of the other legislation.

DePue: How about contacts and friendships that you were able to make at that time; were there some in the legislature, itself, some in political circles?

Lamont: I had a good friend and mentor as a member already. I'd worked in his law firm in summers, while in law school. His name was Ken Boyle, Representative Boyle. I was familiar with him and as both a friend and a former employee and then as, in essence, a co-worker, if he asked for help in the Legislature.

DePue: I know that you moved on to a law firm not too long after that...

Lamont: I spent a little over a year, and I thought that was my opportunity for introduction, but I also felt… It's like boot camp, going to a law firm. You need to do it, to get it out of the way, to see your feel for private practice. Actually I wanted to try to do both, if I could conform my private practice to

[16] The Council of State Governments (CSG) is a nonpartisan, non-profit organization in the United States that serves all three branches of state government. Based in New York City, the CSG has offices across the country, provides practical, nonpartisan advice and consensus-driven strategies—informed by available evidence—to increase public safety and strengthen communities.
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_State_Governments)

the type of work I wanted to do, which was administrative law, legislative law. So I went with a local firm, in town, for the next, at least, two or three years.

DePue: The name of the firm?

Lamont: Presney, P-r-e-s-n-e-y, Casper, C-a-s-p-e-r and Helmich, H-e-l-m-i-c-h.

DePue: And they specialized in administrative law?

Lamont: No, they're a general practice firm. But like anybody, we try to do develop our own practice as best we can, so that you have portable skills and portable clients, in case you have to move on or to support yourself. In the meantime, I was offered a part-time position with the Illinois—how's the best way to say it—Democratic staff, House Democratic staff.

DePue: The caucus, the Democratic Caucus?

Lamont: No, just the staff itself, run by the Democrats, and as a staff attorney, during session. I served as committee council then, to a couple of committees and worked as needed, but typically during Legislative session days. It was part-time, but I really enjoyed it and really got into the politics of the state.

DePue: Did Representative Boyle have a role in your getting that position?

Lamont: My guess is he did. He may have alerted me to an opening, or he may have made a call; I don't really recall. I think they needed help over there and someone willing to do it on a part-time basis.

DePue: What did you do there?

Lamont: As I said, I again served as a committee council, then, a couple of different committees, and assisted in drafting our own legislation. You know, staff drafts too and takes them down to the Legislative Reference Bureau and says, "Put this into appropriate format." But we would also have members that would come in.

As I said, when I was at the Reference Bureau, oftentimes staff came down and gave us guidance. You have certain guidelines on legislative language, how to write the law, whether [it's] "you shall" or whether you use "may" (laughs) or terms like that. You have to be very careful. You put it in, hopefully, a constitutional manner. But oftentimes we would get the initial start of that from the staffs. When I became a staffer, I did some of that. As I recall, that's probably what helped me get that job, because I had experience already in drafting legislation.

DePue: This is kind of a bizarre question, but what's the difference between shall and may?

Lamont: One can be… May suggests there's flexibility. Shall would suggest you do it, that there is no flexibility.

DePue: Why would they use shall instead of will? Never mind, I'm just… I was involved in the same kind of thing, writing military regulations, and must and can, they have different meanings.

Lamont: They all have different meanings. A lot of it deals with how the law and the language has been interrupted. If there's case law on that language, you typically want to conform to that language because it's already been tested—I don't know what they're saying now—So that's often why we use that language.

DePue: Do you remember which committees you were assisting on?

Lamont: One was insurance, and the other was judiciary, as you might expect. And from time to time, I might get assigned to another committee, just to fill in, but I don't recall.

DePue: Was this a paid position?

Lamont: Sure it was.

DePue: What was the thought of the law firm that you were spending so much of your time doing that?

Lamont: They were very amenable to me doing that. That would also reflect in my hourly billing with them, so there was an offset there, of course with some reduction in pay. But it also exposed me to some potential clients to the firm. I think, for the most part, they saw it as an expansion of our practice, out of the regular general practice nature.

Now they could argue to some of our corporate clients that we might be able to handle them on any regulatory or administrative process they might have. If they had an argument with the Department of Insurance, if they had an argument with the Department of Agriculture, somebody in the firm had some knowledge and experience in dealing with those state agencies.

DePue: Did you find your political views evolving or maturing, shall we say, during that period?

Lamont: I certainly became more aligned with the Democratic philosophy and party, definitely.

DePue: How about contacts, some of the people that you remember working with, that became important to you later on?

Lamont: Hmm. Any number of people I came into contact with, Jim Edgar, for that matter, who I believe was initially a… I think he'd been a staff member to the senate when I first met him, then he became a state rep and eventually went to Governor Thompson's office. But we knew each other somewhere along the line. There were probably several others of that ilk. He might be the most prominent of those. Alan Dixon and his staff people, we work with any number of folks, **[**Michael J.] Bakalis [state treasurer at the time], any number of folks who went on to become state officers, Jesse White.[17, 18]

DePue: How about Mike Madigan because he was a recent arrival to the Legislature?[19]

Lamont: Mr. Madigan came in about the same time I did, yes. I didn't know him well, but I knew him; you work with everybody. Jerry Shea was probably the most prominent one, S-h-e-a.[20]

DePue: He was the guy with the...

Lamont: Floor leader at the time for Mayor Daley, the original Mayor Daley. He's the one who put the state income tax in when [Governor Richard] Ogilvie was there. Jerry was a wheeler-dealer and continued to be quite a fixture around the State House for the next thirty-five years.

DePue: I didn't know he had that longevity in the State House.

Lamont: [He] just died two years ago, and he would still suggest he was involved.

DePue: I guess I didn't realize that, because Mike Madigan had risen to prominence by the end of the seventies...

Lamont: Jerry went out, but he was a prominent person behind the scenes, both Democrat and Republican. He was a very close friend to **many** in the legislature, maybe perhaps his ability to help finance campaigns on both sides, given the types of clients that he had, that had considerable contributions,

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[17] Alan John Dixon was an American politician and member of the Democratic Party who served in the Illinois General Assembly from 1951 to 1971, as the Illinois Treasurer from 1971 to 1977, as the Illinois Secretary of State from 1977 to 1981 and as a U.S. Senator from 1981 until 1993. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_J._Dixon)

[18] Jesse Clark White is an American educator and politician from the State of Illinois. A member of the Democratic Party, he has served as the 37th Secretary of State of Illinois since 1999. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesse_White_(politician))

[19] Michael Joseph Madigan is an American politician who is the speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives. He is the longest-serving leader of any state or federal legislative body in the history of the United States, having held the position for all but two years since 1983. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Madigan)

[20] Gerald W. Shea served five terms in the Illinois House as legislative floor leader for Mayor Richard J. Daley, a role that earned him the nickname "Mr. Powerful" during tumultuous political times for Democrats in the city and state. (http://www.chicagotribune.com/politics/ct-gerald-shea-obit-met-20151213-story.html)

[Governor] George Ryan being a very close friend of his. Jerry and I eventually served together on the U of I Board of Trustees.

DePue: Wow. What next?

Lamont: As I said, I stayed with the law firm, I want to say for at least three years. I was at the partnership level or to go into the partnership level, and I had to make some decisions, what I wanted to do. I really enjoyed my state government work. I was offered a position with the State of Illinois, at Capital Development Board.[21]

I decided to try to do that on a full-time basis and leave the law firm because I wanted more administrative law work, working inside a State agency, which I hadn't done yet. And I didn't think it would be fair to take a partnership with my law firm if I didn't intend to… And it was tough.

By the third year, I was much busier and much more involved in my legislative part-time work, probably at least 50 percent of my time, then. I even got into some budget drafting. I remember I didn't typically work on the appropriations' staff, but as shortages or as necessity required it, I ended up doing the budget for the auditor general's office, at the time. As I say, I really wasn't an appropriations staffer, but you did what needed to be done. I became more and more involved in the Legislature, so it was hard to try to suggest you should be a partner on a half-time basis.

DePue: Were you getting involved at all, at this time, in local party politics?

Lamont: A little, sure.

DePue: Precinct meetings and...

Lamont: I didn't do any of those. As part of your staff work you tended to work on setting up funding and things of that nature for all kinds of candidates. So I was involved with some local candidates, nothing particularly serious.

DePue: Do you know how you ended up at CDB, how you were able to land that job?

Lamont: No. I think I applied for it. Whether or not I was assisted on that with Boyle or someone like that, I don't know. Again, I think a lot of it was because I had some experience.

[21] The Capital Development Board (CDB) is made up of professional architects, engineers, project managers, construction experts, and staff who oversee the design and construction of state-funded facilities, including work on colleges and universities, public safety centers, museums and historic sites, state parks, health centers, office buildings, and correctional centers. (https://www2.illinois.gov/cdb/Pages/default.aspx)

DePue: And the legislative connections would have been crucial, I would think, in light of what even CDB was doing.

Lamont: I think there's more to Legislative experience than connections. I don't recall it really being one I had to get rammed on kind situation. I didn't really **need** a job; I had a job. It was pointed out to me this was available, and I went and met with the director at the time, knowing that I'd come. It was under Jim Thompson.

DePue: Seventy-six is what I've got for when the move occurred. Does that sound about right?

Lamont: Something like that. Jim Thompson, I'm sure was the governor.

DePue: He came in in January of seventy-seven, so right about that time.

Lamont: Whenever it was, I know he was the governor at the time when I worked there.

DePue: That would have been an interesting place because not long after he got there, there was a lot of prison construction going on.

Lamont: Prison… It wasn't Build Illinois, unless it was.[22]

DePue: That came later in his administration.

Lamont: Building the prisons, we had some university construction going on; we had the State of Illinois Building in Chicago, and we had the building out on Fifth Street, the Department of Revenue building.

DePue: The Willard Ice Building.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: You had your hands full then, or they did.

Lamont: Over that time period. But yeah, we were pretty prolific in building at that time. I think the DOT [Department of Transportation] building had already been finished.

DePue: Yeah, I believe you're right on that. And you were, once again, doing legal for CDB?

Lamont: Yeah.

[22] Build Illinois was a bond program, funding all-encompassing attempt to deal with the state's crumbling infrastructure, disappearing jobs and shrinking tax base. (https://www.lib.niu.edu/1986/ii860115.html)

DePue: So you had a finger in all of the projects, with whatever controversy might come up?

Lamont: As necessary. There were two of us. Our general counsel was actually out of Chicago, but I was the downstate guy. Again, you also reviewed any legislation that was going to impact the construction industry. You worked with your industry partners, Associated General Contractors, and things like that. You did what you had to do to make sure buildings got built. Sometimes that means going after your contractors, as you can imagine.

DePue: Did you get involved with some labor issues along the way as well?

Lamont: I don't really recall any real labor issues, no. That would have been probably outside of my bailiwick.

DePue: You've expressed this to a certain extent, but can you reflect on what it was about governmental and administrative law that especially appealed to you?

Lamont: I'm not sure I have a finite answer on that, other than typically our issues seem to be more significant than dealing with a lot of the issues you get in private practice. I didn't like divorce work. I didn't like just a real estate transfer. I didn't like the dog bite cases. I actually had my share of criminal law because we had a part-time office over in Cass County, where I'd gone to high school. [In] Cass County you don't have a public defender, so the youngest guy on the block, of the attorneys over there, you're appointed as a public defender as cases come up. So, I handled my share of defense cases over there.

But in the back of my mind, what was going on in state government always was more appealing, typically, because they were more significant issues. The impact of what you were doing was much greater.

Plus, in the law, there's always two sides, and there's usually fight going on (both laugh). You've got, oftentimes, to be the arbiter of some of the legal issues. You take the side that walks in your office, but he or she may not always be right. You may have to explain to them, "Hey," who immediately is going to say, "This is not about money; it's about principle," but then it always comes down to money (both laugh) when you say, "You want me to do this; it's going to cost money." I didn't care for a lot of that type of work. I didn't really do much corporate work at all. It was all personal work.

DePue: How long did you stay at CDB?

Lamont: I'm going to guess, and I am somewhat guessing, about three years. Does that sound right? I'm guessing about three years. Then I was asked… This was by…Ken Boyle at that time, who had become a state's attorney of Macoupin County.

There was a state agency called The State Appellate Prosecutor's Office; it's the opposite of the state appellate defender. The appellate state prosecutor represent all counties, other than Cook County, in defendants' appeals at the appellate court, because typically small counties don't have the time or expertise or the means to get involved in the appellate practice. It is time intensive and takes a bit of an expertise to do that. If you're a one or two man office, you don't have time to deal with these things.

They'd sent to us, and we would represent them. We had offices in four of the five appellate districts, as I saw, everything but Cook County; they had a large enough staff to do their own work. We had about forty lawyers, but I was offered the opportunity to be the executive director of that office. Mr. Boyle brought me over and introduced me to… There was a board of all state's attorneys, and they… I think they liked it because I had legislative background. They got involved in criminal legislation all the time, and they wanted somebody who knew how the world worked, over in the legislature. Since I had done some defense… I'd done a little bit of criminal law, but it was a matter of working legislation and then working the legislature to try to get these things passed. Like the sheriffs, there was a sheriffs' association that handles their legislative work. There is no state's attorneys' association full-time. So I did both [as] an agency director who served in the legislative capacity, as well.

DePue: I guess I'm a little bit confused. As the appellate attorney, you're taking up the state's case in something that had been appealed to that level?

Lamont: All the counties' cases that a defendant gets convicted, and he appeals it, or the state's attorney appeals a case.

DePue: Is this both criminal and civil cases?

Lamont: No, it's only criminal, exclusively criminal.

DePue: And then you've got the aspect of working with the legislature?

Lamont: I'm running the agency. I'm not writing the briefs, although I did write a couple of briefs when I couldn't avoid it (laughs). We just had so much work, we would write all the appellate briefs and argue the cases in front of the appellate court. I primarily oversaw the agency, hired the lawyers, administered the office, handled the budget aspect of it and worked with the board, the state's attorneys' board, to carry out their desires, which often was "Change the law; do what you have to do. This is crazy, get those guns off the street. Lamont, take care of that," (both laugh), those kinds of things.

DePue: Sure, no problem, huh?

Lamont: Right. But, I enjoyed that. It was hands-on, which gave me… Frankly, since I had worked CDB, I had some agency background, this gave me the

experience of administration, running a state agency, not just being an employee of state agency. So it was a pretty significant notch for me, again, working my own budget process, my own agency appropriation and being my own HR [Human Resources] guy to run forty lawyers, which is like herding cats sometimes, and four different offices. I had real estate offices—in essence four pieces of real estate you had to run—plus the secretaries and everything else, [the] administrative staff's there.

DePue: And how old are you at this time?

Lamont: Whatever it would be. I've got to be, what, mid-thirties by now, early to mid-thirties, something like that.

DePue: You were there from…What I've got down—correct me if I'm wrong—is somewhere around 1979 to end of 1982.

Lamont: Seventy-two, I did one year CDB, three years at the law firm and say seven years more; I'm probably about thirty-two, thirty-three.

DePue: You're s until a young lawyer.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: This is pretty heady stuff, I would think.

Lamont: I always thought so (both laugh), at the time, certainly.

DePue: In the State's Attorney's Office and U.S. Attorney's Office, are there an awful lot of young lawyers looking to get started?

Lamont: Sure, yes.

DePue: Kind of a… It's a proving ground, and then you go off on your own?

Lamont: Typically you just need a job. As much as anything, you want to start. Some people looked at us in that job because they enjoyed the appellate process. [In] the appellate process, you're not dealing with the guy who comes in off the street, banging on your table, saying, "Make this happen." You are a student of the law; you study the law; you read the law, and you write the briefs. Some folks are just much more comfortable in doing the intellectual part of the law versus the marketing and the other aspects that goes along with private practice, having to deal with clients on a day-to-day basis and taking those 10:00 calls at night.

DePue: You got your fingers in all of that, it sounds like.

Lamont: Over time, I had. By now, I'm 100 percent with the agency.

DePue: But it still sounds like there's awful lot of diversity and a lot of challenges and the wide ranging aspects of the job.

Lamont: Anytime you have to get a public budget and you report to a board who wants things done a certain way, and then you got to deal with significant staff, you better do it right.

DePue: You mentioned Ken Boyle a couple times in here. I'm wonder if you can tell me a little bit more about him, his personality and his role?

Lamont: Very intelligent, fun loving, good friend. We developed a great friendship over time. Kenny was no shrinking violet, as you can imagine. He'd gone from chair of the Appropriations Committee in the House to all of a sudden, he's goes back to become the state's attorney of Macoupin County, but was always involved; he was always a political guy. We got along very well.

As I say, when I worked with him during my summer in law school, he was running for office. So I got to do a little bit of the campaign work in advancing and driving him and working with him on that. That was one of my first introductions to the actual political process of electioneering, I guess. But then we maintained our relationship as we went through and went on with our lives, I should say.

Kenny was over the top, a great guy. He died much too young. He was a central Illinois boy. He got his start because, I think, his father had been the clerk of the Illinois House when he was going to school and through college. So he was, I think, introduced to politics at a very early age.

DePue: From everything you've told me, just in the last half an hour or so we've been doing this, I'm reflecting back on our previous interview too. You talked about that one boot camp experience you had, but you weren't in the military because of your draft number as much of anything.

Lamont: Right.

DePue: But you've got a very busy life, and then in 1981 you make a decision.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: I'm wondering why you decided you wanted to stick your toe into the military?

Lamont: I always assumed I would serve at one time. Then when it didn't work out during the Vietnam War, at least didn't conform to what I else was going on in my life, and I regretted that, and I think it bothered me that some served and I didn't.

When the opportunity presented itself—I realized rather late age-wise—to join the military, that I wouldn't have to go active duty for two or three months—what they used to refer to as the ninety-day wonder—to be a legal officer in the Guard. When I found that I could get a direct appointment, that's when I raised my hand.

DePue: That was, I believe, 1981 when you were...

Lamont: It was 1981.

DePue: You were thirty-four years old.

Lamont: But when I signed the paperwork, when I raised my hand, I was thirty-five.

DePue: You found out, so it looks like you were investigating this; you were looking into the possibility of doing this.

Lamont: By this time, I had a good friend, I want to say, who was running the Department of Veterans Affairs. I don't know if I was doing some legislative work; I was working with Capital Development Board or what it was, but it came to my attention that I could get a direct commission without having to go to officer candidate school, which I had always believed [was] what you had to do. I couldn't take three months off from any position and do that. When I found out that wasn't necessary, that's when I said, I'm going to do this. I'm going to miss my opportunity; I always wanted to serve, and I decided I was going to do it.

DePue: For almost everybody who gets a commission, following on step means going to the branch specific course.

Lamont: Oh, yes.

DePue: And in that case Judge Advocate General [JAG]?

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: Did you attend that course, then?

Lamont: I attended the… There's two level courses that you must do. I did most of it correspondence, but you still have at least two to three weeks that you would go to the JAG school or go to specific courses to complete your initial schooling. Only then are you qualified as a JAG to represent people in the military courts. In other words, you've made your MOS [Military Operation Specialty]. But then you're required to do a follow-on course, which is a two- to three-year course, a senior JAG course.

DePue: Does that happen years down the road or...

Lamont: No, you immediately go right into it.

DePue: Is that correspondence work?

Lamont: Primarily, but it always entails your…at least your two weeks going to schools, either to JAG school out in Charlottesville, Virginia or wherever they assign you.

DePue: So, way back, many years before, you had the experience of drill sergeants yelling at you; you don't have to go through that.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: But in the Judge Advocate General School, the two weeks you're with them, did they talk about wearing the uniform and when to salute...

Lamont: No.

DePue: …and all that protocol?

Lamont: No.

DePue: It was all strictly military law?

Lamont: It was all strictly military law.

DePue: Any surprises?

Lamont: Not necessarily. Much of it aligns with civil procedure, which is federal civil procedure. A lot of it's interpretation of Army regulations, Army regs versus law, and making the appropriate opinions and guidance to your commanders who have asked you questions in that regard. But we handled everything, from drug cases, of which we had a lot of, urination failures, and processing them out to regular Army. We did family law. We did everything that walked in the door on an Army post.

We had more than a few folks who, of course, would go off to do their annual training and lose their job in the meantime because it was not well known or well considered that this was an appropriate thing to do in a lot of places. We would get involved with the Department of Labor or any federal offices, the U.S. Attorney's office for instance, and try to make the employers understand the law on this regard.

DePue: What unit did you join?

Lamont: I was attached to headquarters.

DePue: Attached? Headquarters of the Illinois...

Lamont: Yeah.

DePue: … Army National Guard?

Lamont: Yeah, Army guard, Illinois Army National Guard. In the headquarters I never went to a brigade, ever.

DePue: "Attached" suggests that you were assigned someplace else.

Lamont: Well, I'm using the wrong word. I became a member of headquarters staff, the legal staff. We had at that time three lawyers at Camp Lincoln, and then they had at least… They had two or three in Chicago, and never the twain shall meet. They did their things; we did ours.

DePue: Some of the things that you were describing, the kinds of things you would get involved with, didn't sound like they would be conducive to doing two days in a weekend in a month. Then you'd wait and held everything off and come back and pick it up again. How did that work?

Lamont: We adjusted our schedules as necessary. That didn't seem to be a real problem, frankly; we worked it out. If we had a trial coming up, you worked during the week on your own, for non-pay and got it ready to do a processing out.

Typically I worked on the prosecution side, if I was pushing someone out who had violated the UCMJ, Uniform Code of Military Justice, in one way or another, then a fellow JAG would be the defense council. But like anything else, we had to plan our cases. You couldn't do that all in a weekend, so you did it on your own, in preparation for the case, typically nights and other weekends. You just did it.

DePue: How about the two weeks annual training?

Lamont: Either I went to a school, or I went to McCoy, Fort McCoy, most of the time. Later on in my years, I was assigned to Camp Grayling a couple of times, up in Michigan.

Major Tom Lamont wears BDUs and sports camouflage paint during his two-week annual training at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin in 1995.

(pause in audio recording)

DePue: A head space and timing error on my part; I turned it off. We're going to start with… I think we had you at annual training.

Lamont: I had a variety of experiences in annual training. Initially a lot of Fort McCoy work and still continuing education because I eventually… I had to do my senior legal studies, JAG coursework, which was three years, which took at

least a week or two weeks additional annual training to go to the JAG school, plus what you did by correspondence otherwise. After that, of course, you go right into the Command and General Staff School, a couple of years later, as a… By the time I reached the rank of major, you start that; you start Command and General Staff.

Tom Lamont looks into the sights of an M47 Dragon anti-tank missile during the 1995 annual training at Fort McCoy.

But over time I did field ATs [Annual Trainings] at Fort McCoy, Camp Grayling a couple of times. Later, as demands upon our active duty forces required more National Guard assistance, I did annual trainings with the 173 Airborne in Vicenza, Italy a couple of times. I went to Grafenwhoer, Germany at least twice because you fill in for active duty JAGs who have been deployed or are in the process of relocating through permanent change of stations, PCSing, or on leave.

I also did twenty-one days of extra duty at one time, took a position, as requested, to Camp Zama, Japan, working out of U.S. Army Japan headquarters over there, which was good because you did a lot of effort with other services. We had Marines around us; we had Marines from Okinawa; we did U.S. Army Japan, but were not the boss. The boss in Japan is U.S. Air Force, and the overall boss in the Pacific is U.S. Navy. CINCPAC [Commander in Chief Pacific Command] controls everything west of Hawaii. So it was all… You were in the pecking order somewhere and you ended up having to deal with other JAGs and individuals from other services, which I enjoyed. I enjoyed the exposure also to some foreign countries.

DePue: I was going to ask you why you stay with the military, why you enjoyed it, but you've just said it; it's all the variety you get and the different activities that you find yourself in.

Lamont: Frankly, I enjoyed the military. I enjoyed wearing the uniform; I took great pride in wearing the uniform. If I ever thought I could have made real living out it, I might have done it full-time. Not sure I could really have done it full-time, but it has crossed my mind that maybe I missed the boat somewhere along the line.

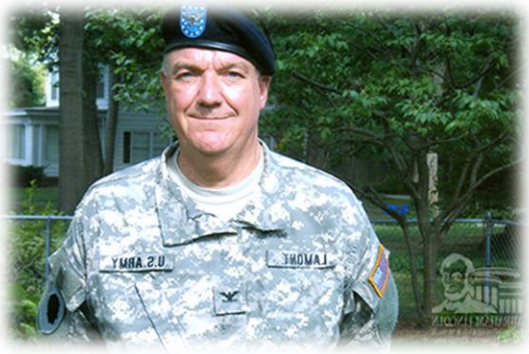
DePue: You got into the military in the early eighties, at a time when most of the people in the National Guard—I can say this because I was in the National Guard, at that time—

Lamont: Post-Vietnam.

DePue: Post-Vietnam. I said, "Well, this is fun, but we're never going to be deployed; we're never going to see any action." Then you get to Desert Shield and Desert Storm...[23, 24]

Lamont: Oh yes.

DePue: A few years later then you get to the War on Terror, and it's just the opposite.[25]



Colonel Tom Lamont in field uniform, circa 2006. The photo was taken in his backyard in Springfield.

Lamont: Correct, correct. I remember, in our jobs, we were going to Desert Storm. Everybody was very concerned of what was to happen over there, whether there was weapons of mass destruction or chemical weapons, biological weapons. Our job was to go in and brief units going overseas, being mobilized, what their rights and obligations were; instruct them of the law of war, who you could shoot and not shoot, and then we'd always meet with the families.

We drafted their wills and powers of attorney at mobilization sites. So, we had all the families there, typically, crying in the background. The little girls, daughters hanging onto dad's leg. Everyone was scared to death. It was pretty high anxiety at the time. So, we all felt our jobs were important.

DePue: Let's get back to your civilian career and slide back to 1982, when I think you ventured out in a different direction at that time.

Lamont: Somewhere along that line, a good friend of mine, who was a good social friend from the Republican side, we talked about establishing a practice that would be more specialized in the government and legislative side, legislative to include probably some lobbying efforts as well. So we thought, if we're ever going to it, at our age, we need to do it now. We rolled the dice and started our own law firm called Webb and Lamont. We flipped a coin to see whose name would go first.

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[23] Operation Desert Shield was a 2006 operation by the Iraq insurgency and al-Qaeda in Iraq, planned in December 2005 as a push against American forces during the Iraq War. The goal was to destabilize the American foothold in the Anbar province over the course of six months. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Desert_Shield_(Iraq))

[24] Desert Storm was a 42-day U.S. led air offensive in 1990, initiated in response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_War)

[25] The War on Terror or terrorism is a term used to describe the American-led global counterterrorism campaign launched in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. (https://www.britannica.com/topic/war-on-terrorism)

DePue: You lost the flip, I take it?

Lamont: I lost the flip, right. That didn't bother me one way or another. We went into our own private practice. He became the parliamentarian for the House, where George Ryan was then the speaker. Then I worked on the outside.

DePue: What was Webb's first name?

Lamont: Ed.

DePue: Edward or just Ed?

Lamont: Edward.

DePue: Ed Webb.

Lamont: Correct.

DePue: Has a ring to it, doesn't it?

Lamont: Ed Webb.

DePue: How much was his time spent as being the parliamentarian?

Lamont: When they're in session, obviously, he was gone. But otherwise, I don't know, it probably took up at least a third to 40 percent of his time.

DePue: I would imagine by this time, you've got contacts all over government, all over the attorney general's CDB, as elsewhere. That's got to be very helpful in what you're going to be doing then.

Lamont: Yes, absolutely. Particularly if you sought state contracts. You wanted to do some work for the state for agencies who couldn't afford to hire another attorney or just had contractual work out there. I applied for some, like anybody else, and did some of it, actually even did a little contract work with the appellate prosecutors. That's when I did write some briefs for them, just to earn some money. When you roll the dice and go out on your own, you better develop a practice right away if you're going to eat.

DePue: Do you remember any particular cases or clients that you helped?

Lamont: No. I really don't, not in the prosecution side. But I ended up representing, over time, not necessarily in that practice, but I think I had a couple of small associations; I don't know what all.

DePue: You mentioned lobbying. Did you do much on the lobbying side?

Lamont: A little, not all that much at that time. If your clients were such that they had legislative work that needed to get done or…Yeah, you did.

DePue: Did you have to register to be a lobbyist?

Lamont: Sure. At some point in time you did, whether or not it was then or later on, when all the… You always had to file a conflict of interest statement, I believe. Yes, that's always changed in time.

DePue: You said that Webb was the Republican side, did you...

Lamont: …do the Democratic side. I don't recall what all I was doing Democratically, to tell you the truth.

DePue: It doesn't sound like those are hard and fast lines. People come, and they don't necessarily have a political agenda, would they always?

Lamont: Right, no, no, not at all. It was pretty generic, but I did things on the Republican side. I think I may have told you, eventually over time I ended up, at the request of the speaker, George Ryan, handling divorce of his administrative assistant, who was married to his floor leader, Representative Jake Wolfe, because we had to do a few things quietly and at the right price, meaning for free (both laugh). And we did. So I knew George, and again, from hanging around the legislators so long, I had acquaintances over there, knew many of the members.

DePue: What did you think of George?

Lamont: I liked George. I thought he was a very upfront, good guy. I remember walking on the floor when he was the Speaker at one time, and he knew… I came straight off the Democratic staff at one time, and I asked for a favor on a bill that had to be done right then on the floor, which was to stop a vote until we could put an amendment on a bill. And he did it. He was a stand tall guy. I believe that to this day.

DePue: It sounds like, in 1986 though, you made another move?

Lamont: It'd be about that time. Again, (laughs) it was my turn to get back involved. Some of the Democrats came to me. That was after [Neil] Hartigan had become attorney general.

DePue: He was elected in 1982, and then he ran for re-election and won again in 1986.

Lamont: This is then about eighty-two or eighty-three. We messed up...

DePue: How long did you stay with Webb and Lamont?

Lamont: Probably just a couple of years, a couple of years until my name went into the barrel again. I started getting the calls as Hartigan is putting his staff together. This was probably four months, three or four months after he was elected. Of

course, you're elected in November; you come in January, but it was probably February or March, somewhere along the line. I kept hearing, literally third-hand, that they were coming after me to be the first deputy assistant.

DePue: Who's they?

Lamont: Hartigan.

DePue: Did you know Hartigan before that time?

Lamont: No, I did not. I knew of him and had met him but did not have any real interaction with him that I recall.

DePue: He was a Chicago guy...

Lamont: Yeah, but he lived in Springfield.

DePue: Did he at the time? He was...

Lamont: Going to say, what was his first job?

DePue: [Governor] Dan Walker's lieutenant governor, but the...

Lamont: Right, when he was lieutenant governor, he and his family lived in Springfield, because we ended up living on the same street that he did. But he'd already gone by then. But we had conversations later on about living on Warson Road in Springfield.

DePue: I don't know that Walker and Hartigan ever spoke to each other after an initial meeting.

Lamont: I think that may be true.

DePue: But we're talking many years beyond that, so I apologize.

Lamont: Anyway, I was hearing this. I said, "If they want me, they can call me." Eventually I got a call, but I wasn't working it. I certainly wasn't having Ken Boyle or anybody else working this. I didn't necessarily need this job. For the right job, I thought, I'll listen to them. I probably would have preferred a contract, frankly, and stay in my private practice because you're changing jobs a little too often here; you'd like to maintain your practice.

I go over and meet with Hartigan. I see the guy just walking out in front of me, who I didn't know. I walk in, and Hartigan says, "I just gave away the first deputy job." [I] said, "Really, I was under the impression that's what I was being called in for." "Well, some downstate folks…"

I found really what the deal was. Some of the major players downstate, who carried him downstate, made the call and put one of their guys in who

was a state's attorney, I think, downstate somewhere, as our first deputy. Good guy, I liked him. But he said, "I still want you here. You need to get on the team. We're eventually going to run for governor," blah, blah, blah. Okay.

He offered me the head of General Law, which is the number one department job. At that time there are four or five different departments, but General Law is the one that represents almost all the defense work for the State agencies. You represent the State. There are other little pieces, like Ag Law and Consumer Fraud or stuff that probably was much more limited in scope. General Law would represent everybody.

DePue: Your resume is got director of civil litigation and general law; is that pretty much the same thing?

Lamont: Yes. That was the title, director of civil litigation/general law.

DePue: Does that mean you're not going to be working any kind of criminal cases?

Lamont: Correct. Now criminal law, I think, is pretty much handled out of Chicago. We did have a criminal law component.

DePue: And where was your office?

Lamont: We did very little criminal law because states attorneys do the criminal law. The Attorney General's Office doesn't really prosecute. We tend to work on investigations with both your federal prosecutors and your state prosecutors, but not necessarily trying those cases. We have our share, getting into fraud against the state, things like that.

DePue: Did you have any personal, political ambitions at this time?

Lamont: No, I didn't really see any openings. I don't recall at all of that. It'd be great if something fell into your lap, but I didn't seek out a state's attorney or any kind of a position to run for. One time I do recall a state's attorney's position opened up in Morgan County, and the states' attorneys that I all knew around the appellate prosecutors wanted me to go after that slot.

Vince Demuzio was the state senator at the time, who I knew very well from the Boyle campaigns. He was also a Macoupin County person. Boyle believed they could assist me in a… I think the job came open because there was—I believe this—he became a judge, and it was open for appointment and then run for it. It was intriguing. I talked to my wife about it, and we both said, "No." She liked what she was doing in Springfield at the State Library. My commute was kind of out of the question. We had young children by then. So we said, "No, we're not going to do it." That was the only time I ever recall thinking of running for office until later, when I ran for University of Illinois Board of Trustees.

DePue: And we're working towards that. How did long did you stay with the attorney general's office?

Lamont: At least one term.

DePue: It strikes me… You mentioned that, from the day you walked in for that first appointment, Hartigan was talking about looking to be governor.

Lamont: Hundred percent. "If you're going to get on board, get on board now." I just remember that comment.

DePue: Do you think he was an effective attorney general?

Lamont: Within reason, yes, because he was hands-off. He let his employees do their job. One of the key jobs in that office, besides defending the state, was doing attorney general's legal opinions. We had a gentleman who'd been there for years and was a straight shooter all the way in giving legitimate state opinions, not politically motivated. You're always being asked to interrupt law for a state's attorney, a county official and municipal official, a legislator or a state agency. An attorney general opinion doesn't carry the force and effect of a legal case, but typically people will conform then to the attorney general's opinion, legal opinion, that comes out. His name was Sean Denny; he was fantastic attorney and just a straight shooter. I don't think Hartigan, rarely, if ever, got involved in suggesting the outcome of an opinion.

DePue: Did you like working for Hartigan?

Lamont: Yes. I had no problems with him until later, when he was unsuccessful. And we never saw him again (laughs).

DePue: You mean when he ran and lost for governor in 1990? Is that what you're referring to?

Lamont: No, it's actually before then. Did he lose in a primary?

DePue: He lost in the general election to Jim Edgar.

Lamont: Then he had to have two years remaining in his… Would it have been mid…Were we back then, where we ran governor one year, and two years later ran...

DePue: No. All the constitutional offices run at the same time.

Lamont: Whenever it was that he lost, we never saw him again. He never came to Springfield.

DePue: How about Jim Thompson, governor Thompson at the time, did you have any dealings with him or his office?

Lamont: Only in my days at the Capital Development Board and only, maybe, through his agency directors when I was in private practice, but not really. I don't recall any direct dealings with him.

DePue: It sounds like you were with the attorney general's office for a few years and then another move?

Lamont: Yes (laughs).

DePue: Sorry, I didn't mean to make it sound like that.

Lamont: Well, it's nice to be wanted. I rarely applied for a job. I was always a little bit restless and received a call from a Chicago law firm, would I be interested in joining their firm? I said, "No, I'm not moving to Chicago." "We don't want you to move to Chicago. We want you to have an office in Springfield and represent our clients on the legislative and administrative side and build a practice."

It was a small firm called Gordon and Glickson. At that time I think there were like eighteen, nineteen, twenty attorneys, and it was a law firm that you'd refer to as a boutique practice. It was an intellectual property, which and that timeframe, was very rare. We were just getting into computer law, and these guys were…

Our key partner in that had gone to school, I believe, at Berkeley and then had worked with a Silicon Valley law firm in the early stages of intellectual property law. He comes back, joins Dad's firm, really takes it over in Chicago and builds an intellectual property practice. There's very little legislative law at the time on how to deal with software. He actually wrote a book on contracting for the sale of software. All this stuff is brand new, and there's no law on it. There's been no case law on it. It's s until evolving.

They had clients trying to figure out how this is going to work. Do you put sales tax on software? It was things like that. Who owns the software, and how you protect it? As they had legislative work, I handled their work down here. But I also built my own legislative and administrative law practice again and some of the carryover from the old Webb and Lamont days, again representing a number of associations. I represented the Supervisors Assessment Association. I did work for the, again, Veterans Affairs Agencies, whatever typically came in the door, but I did legislative work and administrative law work for them here.

DePue: That does sound like stimulating work, because you're working in such a completely new area.

Lamont: And, I'm in Chicago at least every other week for a day or two. I'm constantly running back and forth.

DePue: Do you drive up there, fly or take the train?

Lamont: Flew, flew every time, Air Illinois at that time, landing at Meigs Field.[26] I could leave my house, fly to Chicago, and if the cabs were at Meigs Field, I would beat my partners who had left their house the same time in Highland Park to downtown, literally, because at that time I could go out to the airport ten minutes before I had to get on a plane, literally. You'd walk right up there and just walk onto the plane. There was no security. Typically our only delay was weather, going into Meigs Field, or the cabs weren't at Meigs Field, and you had to wait until one showed up. That might take you ten or fifteen minutes sometimes, otherwise, boom, I'm at 444 North Michigan, and all's right with the world.

DePue: You probably had an emotional reaction, then, when Mayor Richard M. Daley decided to start tearing up Meigs Field one morning.

Lamont: Absolutely. Fortunately, it was after my time.

DePue: Yeah.

Lamont: But, oh yeah. I thought, What's he doing? It was 9-11 reaction, remember.

DePue: The dates I got from your resume were 1987 to 1998. Does that sound right? Eighty-seven sounds about right, from what we've talked about in starting. That would have been kind of at the beginning of Hartigan's second term.

Lamont: No. It's private practice in all that time. I was with the firm at least five years, if not more. Then I got a call, another one of those calls, from somebody you'd met along the line, Gery Chico, who had been Mayor Daley's chief of staff.[27] I'd had some work with the Daley organization by then. I was also a U of I trustee by then.

DePue: This might be a good time because I know you had a hard stop at 3:00, right?

Lamont: Yeah, I do. You heard that; I got to be someplace at 3:45.

DePue: So, this would be a good place to stop, if you don't mind?

Lamont: Alright.

[26] Merrill C. Meigs Field Airport was a single runway airport in Chicago that was in operation from December 1948 until March 2003, on Northerly Island an artificial peninsula on Lake Michigan. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meigs_Field)

[27] Gery J. Chico is an American politician, Chicago lawyer, public official and former Democratic primary candidate for United States Senate. Chico served as the Chief of Staff to Mayor Richard M. Daley from 1992 to 1995 and board president of the Chicago Public School from 1995 to 2001. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gery_Chico)

DePue: Thank you very much.

(end transcript #2)

Interview with Thomas Lamont

#VRT-A-L-2018-004.03

Interview Date: February 22, 2018

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Thursday, February 22, 2018. This is Mark DePue, and I'm once again with former secretary, Assistant Secretary of the Army, Tom Lamont. How are you this morning, sir?

Lamont: I'm just wonderful.

DePue: We spent quite a bit of time on your background. Today we get into some of the meat of the things that I wanted to talk to you about. Let's start with how you found yourself being elected—I believe you were elected—to the University of Illinois Board of Trustees. That was in 1990?

Lamont: Yeah, I **was** elected. It goes back, again, to my friend and mentor, Ken Boyle, the former state representative and then, later, state's attorney in Macoupin County and eventually the director of the State Attorney Appellate Services Commission, who happened to be a member of the U of I Board of Trustees.

Just in conversation once, we were talking about the university and university sports and so on, because we both had a deep interest there, having both attended law school there. We were always discussing one of the various

topics about the U of I. He said, "Have you ever thought about taking a run at the University of Illinois Board of Trustees?" meaning running for it. Actually he said, "Applying for it." Yeah, taking a run at it. I said, "No, but that'd be a great spot. I think that'd be a lot of fun." (computerized voice interrupts)

DePue: These machines nowadays.

Lamont: And, I said, "No, how would I go about that?" He says, "Typically, you reach out to the University of Illinois Alumni Association because they make recommendations to the party, assuming I was going to run as a Democrat. He said, "Their influence is becoming less and less on that, but that's probably where you should start." So I did.

I sent a letter to the alumni association, asked for their consideration, and actually, I don't know that I ever heard back from anyone. I then came to find out that the party typically was no longer interested (laughs) in the recommendations from the alumni association. They were more interested in what you might bring to the ticket.

So I just then reached out to some people I knew within the party and said, "Is there any interest in me going on the ticket and running for University of Illinois? I'm a graduate of the law school. You know a little of my political background, and I'm downstate," which became reasonably important at that time.

DePue: Was this something where your name would appear on the statewide ballot?

Lamont: Yeah, absolutely. And low and behold, it just worked out. I'm not sure they had a lot other people seeking out that position because they're far more interested (laughs) in the more important constitutional officer positions, but needed to fill it.

DePue: Did you go before the selection committee?

Lamont: No, I did not. I don't… No, I did not. My name was submitted to the selection committee. I still had relationships with the House Democratic staff, and I'm sure that was what helped me because the more senior people were working with the House Democratic…the state Democratic Commission or whatever you call it.

DePue: Committee?

Lamont: Committee, on the selection process. Again, I'm not sure how much interest there was in that position or those who had actually made an effort to reach out for it, beyond going through the U of I Alumni Association. But when there's recommendations with, as far as I know, discounted, I don't even know if I was a recommendation, but I'm told they paid little attention at that time, or less attention at that time, to the recommendations.

DePue: That sounds like you didn't have any kind of a primary race to worry about either?

Lamont: Did not.

DePue: I'm assuming you didn't put a lot of money into the race, nor did the party.

Lamont: Part of my agreement with my wife was, we weren't going to spend a lot of our money just for my ego or interest in going on the board, and we didn't. We spent some, (laughs) but it was probably less than $500 or $600. But, I had to **raise** some.

DePue: You obviously won. I assume we're talking about the election in November of 1990.

Lamont: Correct.

DePue: How long did you end up serving on the board?

Lamont: Believe it or not, I can't really recall. I think it was eleven or twelve years.

DePue: Was there sometime in that timeframe when the positions became appointed and not elected?

Lamont: There was. Look at this, someone gave me…they put a...

DePue: You're digging into your drawer now.

Lamont: Two thousand and three, yeah.

DePue: Two thousand three.

Lamont: Two thousand and three, yes.

DePue: That's a pretty heavy...

Lamont: One of those going away things you get.

DePue: …paper weight.

Lamont: Yes. And you see how much use I get out of it (DePue laughs).

DePue: Do you know when that happened and the background for why they made that change?

Lamont: I have some idea. In conversations with Governor Edgar, at the time, who was elected governor at the same election, it was proposed and may have been even proposed previously but not acted upon in the legislature. But the

proposal came to the legislature to move it from an elected position to an appointed position.

I questioned why you want to do that, and I had a conversation with Governor Edgar. Privately, he said he was taking a fair amount of pressure from his party because they had not won. It's usually three seats are up every two years, for a six-year term. There are nine members of the board, so it's three, three and three every two years. The Republicans had not won for the last two elections, I believe. Since he was the governor, they preferred the governor make appointments. I had a discussion with him about this. "Are you sure you want to do this?" He says, "I'm getting a lot of heat, and I think we can… We might get a better quality of trustee. We won't have to worry about simply political folks and, maybe, even non-alums being put on the board. He said, "My intention is to make the appointments to be a blue ribbon board."

DePue: Did you have any problems with him saying that?

Lamont: No, I disagreed with him (both laugh). I felt it was appropriate if the body—body meaning the nominating people—did what they should do and look to that effect as well, good people, solid people, alums, that'd be fine. Although I do agree with him, it should be a non-political board, as far as the action that you take in policy decisions. So we agreed to disagree on that.

DePue: It sounds like sometime during the time frame that Edgar was governor; that's up through January of 2009 is when that change occurred.

Lamont: Yes. And he reappointed me.

DePue: How many board members are there?

Lamont: There are nine, but now they've added three student board members, one from each campus: Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield, of which, as I recall, one of them will get a vote. All three of them do not get votes. This came about probably four, five, six years into my tenure. Student activist sought positions on the board because they didn't think that there was adequate representation from the students' perspective on some of the policies we were taking.

I actually disagree with that as well, because we always brought students in to speak to us, in essence, in a hearing situation, to hear what their thoughts were on any major policy decisions we were going forward with. I didn't particularly agree with a student vote. I'm not sure what that was going to bring them.

I always felt there was one reason the students were on one side of the desk and teachers were on the other side of the desk. One was to teach them knowledge. The student is learning and lacks, I felt, some of the experience necessary to make some of the decisions. But hey, that was just my opinion. I wasn't too overly concerned one way or another.

DePue: That harkens back to the 1960s and the students' rights movement and all.

Lamont: It all sounds good, but I wasn't sure at the time, what do they really bring to the table, other than their thoughts as a student, which we appreciated. I thought we were able to gather their positions in other ways.

DePue: Was the president of the university part of the board, or did he attend board meetings?

Lamont: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

DePue: A voting member?

Lamont: No. Jim Edgar, the governor, is ex-officio and can come and vote if he wishes to. And, I think, for the first ever, Governor Edgar did come to one of our meetings and vote. There was some controversy going on, with regard to the selection of the chair…no, selection of the chancellor for the University of Illinois Chicago, and there were some differences of opinion. As I recall, we were having tie votes, or something was going on that we either had someone who was ill and couldn't attend… Actually, I think we had the death of one of our members, so I think we only had eight at the time. There was no student trustee at that time. It became somewhat controversial. I believe it involved Paula Wolfe, if that name rings a bell?[28]

DePue: It does.

Lamont: There was a lot of lobbying going on by a variety of people to various trustees from external sources, of who should be the chancellor. My personal feeling was these people should not be involved in the selection process. It became public. Next thing you know you're reading about it in Michael Sneed's column in the *Sun Times*. There was front page stories going on. Paula Wolfe, in her own right, was a very well-known and active person in Chicago and married to a very influential Republican. There was some concerns about that because she did not have experience, as I recall, as a previous academician in administrative capacity.

DePue: She was the candidate for the position?

Lamont: She was **a** candidate, who applied for it.

DePue: She had been Governor Thompson's policy director for...

[28] Paula Wolff was the former head of Governor Jim Thompson's program policy staff and co-director of Governor James Edgar's transition team, who became the center of a controversial selection to fill the job of chancellor of the University of Illinois at Chicago. Though Wolff had strong support from both governors, as well as Chicago Mayor, Richard M. Daley, the position was awarded to UIC vice chancellor James Stukel in 1991. (https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/whos-afraid-of-paula-wolff/Content?oid=877632)

Lamont: Correct.

DePue: …fourteen years.

Lamont: Right, and Paula was a good person. Whether or not she should be chancellor, that was the question. There were other good candidates before us. It just was a little unseemly, in that there were external forces lobbying to fill that position.

DePue: It sounds like one of the most important roles that the board of trustees has is selection of new chancellors, new presidents.

Lamont: The president and the chief administrative officers of the university, sure.

DePue: What other roles did the Board of Trustees have?

Lamont: We're a policy making body and not an operational body. We're always reminded, "Do not get too deep into the woods about how this university operates. (DePue laughs) You make the policy; just let the administrators do their job." Oftentimes that's a thin line that gets crossed.

DePue: Who was it that was telling you those kinds of things?

Lamont: We're all educated as to what our role is by (both laugh) various administrators, and we had a wonderful secretary to the Board of Trustees. DePue:I'm trying to recall her name.

Lamont: Yes, Michelle Thomson, she was great, PhD, doctor...

DePue: A professor at one of the universities?

Lamont: No, she was a secretary to the board and had been for many, many years and fortunately was still there when I left. She's since retired. She was married to a former state Senator, Woods Bowman. He was a professor himself.

DePue: I understand that somewhere during this tenure you became the chairman of the board?

Lamont: I did become the chair, rather early in my tenure. Another controversy arose...

DePue: Once again, looking at the paperwork.

Lamont: (laughs) Yes. I became chair in 1992, the first time, and I was the newest person on the board with the least experience. But there was some controversy as to who should be the chair. It became pretty political, and again, a little anxiety among a lot of the board members as to who was going to be the chair. Our long-time chair had passed away; that's what it was.

So we had eight people on the board, and the question was, who was going to fill the chair. The chair did not sit in a term. He or she was elected, annually by the board, but the same person had been chair for quite some time, as I say, when he rather unexpectedly passed away.

DePue: Do you remember his name?

Lamont: No. No. It was within probably six or seven months of me getting there, so I probably didn't attend half a dozen meetings with him, a Chicagoan.

DePue: If you're the newest person on the board, it sounds like you weren't likely to be elected into that position by fellow board members.

Lamont: No, Nor did I seek it by any means. I realize I'm by far the youngest and most inexperienced, and two people were nominated. They were nominated by party; one came from the Republican side; one came from the Democrat side. Having only eight people, there was split votes, two or three different split votes, in successive monthly meetings. I believe the university president was getting a little exasperated because we couldn't get a president of the board, chairman of the board.

DePue: Was that Stan Ikenberry at the time?[29]

Lamont: It was Stan Ikenberry, yes. There was some controversy, but I never participated, nor did I ever push to be nominated. What transpired was, one night I got a call from Governor Edgar. He said, "We need to put this controversy behind us. We shouldn't be reading about U of I trustee things on the front page of the [*Chicago*] *Tribune*. It looks like this is a political board, and the board doesn't really act politically in its policy making. It's sending the wrong message to people out there." As I absolutely agreed.

He said, "I've had a conversation with president Ikenberry, who's very unhappy with the situation and doesn't want to put up with this much longer, from his own personal standpoint." I said, "Well, what can we do?" He says, "You have to be the new chair." I said, "Jim, Governor, what are you talking about? I can't do that." I said, "Why would you think I should be the chair?" He says, "I've talked to my members, and you've made the least enemies so far (both laugh), and they believe you can be fair." He said, "So, if you're willing to accept it, I will see that you will get votes from the Republican side." I said, "I have to have that conversation with the person, the other person who was being nominated," because it was always a four-four tie, two

[29] Stanley O. Ikenberry (born March 3, 1935) is an American academic who served as the fourteenth president of the University of Illinois. Ikenberry was responsible for a major consolidate of University campuses and new student initiatives. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanley_O._Ikenberry)

nominations. That was Ken Boyle, my friend and mentor. I said, "Someone needs to talk with him, and I'd prefer it not be me, initially."

Anyway, I don't know what all transpired, but he and I eventually talked. I said, "Ken, they're…I'm going to be nominated as well. Are you prepared to withdraw?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "I agree, we need to move this on."

DePue: Was it a four-four split along party lines?

Lamont: As I recall.

DePue: In a non-political body?

Lamont: Actually, I think it went both ways. I don't know that it was pure, because I think they're only, at that time, I think they were only three Democrats. The fourth Democrat had died. And the Republicans dominated the board, but one of the Republicans voted for Boyle; they were very close.

DePue: That was during an era when Republicans were doing fairly well in statewide elections.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: How long did you serve as chairman?

Lamont: I served one year because when I was elected… I won't go into it, but there was some controversy at the election too. It wasn't quite as smooth at the table as it should have been. But, it required me voting for myself.

At my first meeting, I said, "We need to not allow this situation to happen again. I am going to serve for one year, and I will not seek reelection. I think everybody on this board's capable of being a chair. I have the least experience, but I'm going to try to put something into effect here." I can't remember if I said one year or two years, but I believe, I said one year at the time. I said, "And then we need to bring some common sense on the succession. I think it should rotate."

I argued that it should rotate on a two-year basis…well, when that year was up. I argued then that it should be at least a two-year tenure, that it should be expected that the incoming chair should serve two years, because it takes you some time to figure out your role and the administrative processes and how to handle the agenda, all the various things that go into being a chair of a multi-billion dollar operation of three campuses and 20,000 employees.

DePue: Was this a paid position?

Lamont: Oh, no (laughs).

DePue: So, it wasn't even a full time position...

Lamont: It was a detrimental position, trust me, (DePue laughs) on your pay because it's very time consuming, more time consuming since most every trustee was [from] Chicago or suburban Cook County or the five counties surrounding Cook County. Ken Boyle and I were the only two downstaters. Being close to the university, when the university wanted somebody to be over there for an event, speech, an introduction to somebody else. it typically fell to my honor to be able to do that. And most of it was an honor to be able to do it. But it was time consuming.

DePue: Did you get reimbursed for travel and those kind of expenses?

Lamont: Well, major travel. I didn't get reimbursed for driving to Champaign.

DePue: Where were the board meetings?

Lamont: They alternated between campuses. We usually had eleven meetings a year and didn't have one in August. Typically, they'd be, say, five or six in Urbana. The remainder would be in Chicago, although we immediately… When we eventually took in Sangamon State to become the University of Illinois at Springfield, we believed we had to have at least one meeting a year on the Springfield campus, so we added that.

DePue: That kind of sets us up for the one big change that I wanted to address with you. I'll set this up by saying that 1994 was a huge Republican year, nationwide, and in the State of Illinois. For the first time in anybody's living memory, the Republicans controlled both the Illinois House and the Illinois Senate, which allowed the Republicans to make some significant changes, one of them being that Governor Edgar had some specific things in mind for educational reform. I'll turn it over to you to discuss what the impact was in terms of the university system?

Lamont: The University of Illinois is a little bit different, since we have our own board of trustees. But the other state universities, I think, we're divided into two different governing boards of universities. I don't recall the name, but then they would have...

DePue: Board of Regents and the Board of Governors.

Lamont: The Board of Governors, right. So we didn't have a role in the decision making or, to my knowledge, even a position on what Governor Edgar believed he should do on that. We didn't participate or take any positions in the legislature, as an institution. But among those changes was the University of Illinois Board of Trustees going from an elected to an appointed board. I don't believe we added the student trustees at that time. I think they came two to four years later, as I recall.

DePue: Was that the time that Sangamon State University is going to transition to become the University of Illinois Springfield?

Lamont: It was definitely during Governor Edgar's tenure. I'm not sure that initially was part of the reform. It may well have been; I simply don't recall. My experience with that situation was, again, receiving a call from Governor Edgar and asking that I come and meet with him, and he expressed the desire, an interest, that Sangamon State change.

It was not being well received in the academic arena. There was some question. It wasn't growing. It didn't seem to be carrying out its original mandate when Sangamon State was created. And he says, "It just needs help. Southern Illinois University has expressed a strong interest in absorbing Sangamon State. I'm not sure that's the best thing to do, given the fact that University of Illinois is within ninety miles of it. It would seem to be a better fit for..."

DePue: This is what Edgar's saying to you?

Lamont: Yes. He said, "I would like you to determine, among the university and your fellow trustees, you're thoughts on the University of Illinois absorbing Sangamon State. In my opinion that was his preference. He just thought it was more logical.

We looked at it. We agreed—we, being the administration and the board—agreed that if somebody was going to absorb Sangamon State and have a presence in the State Capital, it should be the University of Illinois. So we went forward in that direction.

Members of the Urbana faculty didn't always agree with that. There wasn't a universal agreement from the faculty that we do that, because of the current reputation of Sangamon State and its academic standing and, I think, the fear that it would just take a lot of funding away from the Urbana campus and that did we really need another piece of a liberal arts college—which was primarily what Sangamon State was—ninety miles away from our historic campus. So they weren't excited about that prospect.

DePue: I suspect some of that had to do with the origins and the design of Sangamon State in the first place. It won't take too much time, but...

Lamont: It was a two-year institution, called a "senior" institution, that in earlier times, as an experiment, was located near a community college [Lincoln Land Community College] campus. The first two years were to be on that community college and then to move forward to the senior school, which was Sangamon State. We would not take it as a two-year institution. It had to conform to a...

DePue: So Sangamon State, two years or University of Illinois Springfield, a traditional four-year university.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: With masters' program. And, I think, maybe they had one or two doctorate programs...

Lamont: I think we had some...

DePue: Maybe not.

Lamont: Not sure at that time that they did.

DePue: You're probably right on that. Was there ever a concern or consideration to have oversight over Eastern [Illinois University], Southern [Illinois University], Western [Illinois University], Northern [Illinois University], SIUE [Southern Illinois University East], Illinois State [University], all these others?

Lamont: There was discussion. It wasn't deep or lengthy discussion, but since there was reformation going on within the academic community, there was discussion of the University of Illinois absorbing, becoming more a system at that time, and taking the schools that offered doctoral programs.

Southern was always going to stay by itself because it had its own Board of Trustees. Illinois State University and Northern Illinois University, at that time, were the only two others that had doctoral programs. So there was some discussion of whether or not we, as an institution, should move in that direction as well. This was as we were getting ready to take and absorb Sangamon State.

We thought that was a step too far for us to take at that time, without some real long-term planning and budgeting and all the other issues that might come to bear. We didn't want to do that. We did not want to become another University of California, with fifteen different campuses or SUNY, New York, State University of New York.

DePue: Were there any unexpected challenges once the changes were made, especially with the Sangamon State?

Lamont: Yes, because Sangamon State had a unionized faculty. Neither our Chicago or Urbana campus had a unionized faculty. President Ikenberry and others were adamantly opposed to bringing in a union faculty, even if it was just with one campus. They wanted to be uniform in how they worked with their faculty.

Now, we had unions and certainly non-faculty unions. In fact, I think we exceeded, at that time, over fifty different locals, since we had hospitals

and nurses and service employees and hotels—The union is a hotel in Champaign—things of that nature, teamsters, you name it, electricians; we had them all. But faculty they felt was different. There was some question how that was going to play out.

I think, essentially, it was reached that it would go to a vote of the faculty of whether or not they wanted to become unionized. The vote was to be **all** the university faculty, including each campus. Given the numbers of faculty at Champaign-Urbana and in Chicago, they roundly defeated a vote to unionize. So it was not, and that's how it went forward.

DePue: Here's another contentious issue, I believe, probably from most of your tenure there. This is the kind of thing that you don't necessarily anticipate until you're in the midst of it, Chief Illiniwek.

Lamont: Oh, yes. A very controversial issue, which took time, almost, in every single meeting. One of things I put into place, I shouldn't say "I," but the trustees put into place as a change—and some of this came from the administration as well—is we need to allow time for public input in our meetings.

So we set aside time, every trustees' meeting, for those who wished to speak. All we required was, they give us notice and, typically, what the topic was to be, and allotted of them x-amount of time. I think our only other rules were, we would not engage in debate with them. They were to come, make their point, and leave.

This was dominated for so long by folks who wished to see Chief Illiniwek go away, those who saw the chief as a racist symbol, as a mascot, things of that nature. It was being driven by a small minority faculty at the U of I. Actually, I think there was only two or three people, but they were very significant in their organization of anti-chief. It got to the point we would have demonstrations that would erupt during our meetings and became very disruptive. It became quite a distraction, all the time. It became national. It was part of a national movement do away with Native American symbols, if they were seen to be racist in how they were used.

I personally did not believe it was racist at all, nor did we believe that he was a mascot. Originally the Native Americans did not either, as even the outfit that Chief Illini wore was presented to us by the chief of the Lakota Sioux in a very moving ceremony. It went back many, many years. We believed the chief demonstrated courage, leadership, bravery, things of that nature.

By the time we were involved, the symbol of the chief was only authorized on certain types of merchandise, nothing derogatory. You'll always hear, "Well, it was on toilet paper and things like that." No, unh-uh, not by our authority. If we ever found things like that, we sought to have it removed. The

student chief was always required to go live on a reservation and truly learn some Native American ways.

DePue: Is that something that's supposed to happen in the summertime?

Lamont: Yeah.

DePue: Not in school?

Lamont: However it happened. I think if you speak to anybody, previous chiefs, I think that was still the case during our time. We saw our chief as much different than, say, the Florida State chief, the Seminoles, where he'd ride in on a horse with a flaming spear and throw it down. Our chief never appeared, except at half-time at a game, did a dance, a dance that was a legitimate, Indian dance that he was taught.

Anyway, this continued over years and years, and some people were just convinced that, no matter what, it had to be harmful to Native Americans. Well, we reached out to Native Americans. We reached out to why was different in Florida, Florida Seminoles, the South Dakota State Sioux and things like that, all of whom had Native American symbols. We learned that, because they were in contract with the tribes… The Seminoles had a tribal organization. The Dakota Sioux, there's a tribal organization and tribal governance. Seminoles in particular, there was a contract in which they received money.

Behind the scenes, I think there were a few other things (DePue laughs), like they might get their electricity shut off in their casino, among other things. But we don't know if any of that was true, at the time. We do know there was an agreement with tribal elders.

So, we looked around for our heritage. The Illini Indians were nomadic, we were advised. We all knew this anyway, through our own history. They were nomadic and were not nearly in an organized fashion as these other tribes. The best we could find was remnants of the Illini on a Oklahoma—I believe it was Oklahoma—reservation, who did have an organized body. They didn't particularly call themselves the Illini, but they were an off shoot. It went to a vote down there. They saw nothing wrong with what we were doing and how our chief was used. They thought it was a good thing.

Well, guess what? There were some Native American Associations at that time, one in particular that, in my opinion, was being organized for more pecuniary reasons, to make money and who appeared at our meetings a couple of times. As I recall, at least one or two of the principals involved in that association had been either convicted felons or had been involved in issues at say, Wounded Knee, otherwise, but seemed to be more interested in speaking

fees than actually promoting Native American interest.[30] They became a strong voice in pushing the anti-chief activists at the university.

DePue: Did the issue ever come up to a vote by the student body?

Lamont: Frankly, I don't recall.

DePue: Do you have a sense how the student body felt about the issue?

Lamont: We reached out to the student representatives, and typically the response was favorable for the chief. We were swamped with letters of support from alumni and alumni groups. However, the university began conducting surveys.

It became known that, from about late eighties, early nineties, the trend among our alumni was neutral or changing, away the chief, meaning… The questions were put to them, "If the chief is believed harmful by others, as a racist symbol, then maybe it's time for him to go." The alumni before that time were adamantly opposed to the chief going, but the trend was clearly moving to doing away with the chief.

DePue: How was the issue eventually resolved?

Lamont: I was gone by then. But we held numerous meetings. We brought in people. We tried to accommodate everyone here, as you typically do in a university (both laugh). We brought in Native American speakers. We brought in a Native American psychologist, who lived on a reservation. He was a psychologist for the reservation, the reservation school kids. He was a strong promoter of the chief, as a symbol of bravery, character. His stories were, we have the highest incidence of fetal alcoholism, one thing after another on Indian, Native American reservations. He said, "They need people to look up to. Our Native American children need to see that there are folks out there who don't just work in casinos. They need to retain the heritage of Native Americans in a more appropriate way." And [he] strongly recommended we keep the chief.

That didn't fly with many 19-, 20-year-old kid on campus, could care less or paid no attention to that. They didn't want to hear any of that. They were determined; don't confuse us by the facts. We sought all kinds of other assistance and help and guidance.

Then the NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] got involved. They all start figuring out how to do this. So the NCAA got involved. Well, first it was the Association of University… the accrediting

[30] The Wounded Knee Massacre was a domestic massacre of several hundred Lakota Indians, mostly women and children, by soldiers of the United States Army that occurred on December 29, 1890, near Wounded Knee Creek on the Lakota Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, following a botched attempt to disarm the Lakota camp. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wounded_Knee_Massacre)

association, I believe it was. You go through an accreditation every so many years; every school goes through this. They sent a delegation that wanted to also talk about the chief, because they believed it might interfere with our academic mission, if this was seen as intolerable on our campus.

I and one other trustee appeared before that group and thought we would have an honest discussion and debate. [It] did not work out that way. I brought videos of how the chief was used, of how he danced, the purpose of that dance and so on. But it was over the moment we walked in. They made it very clear that they weren't going to tolerate this. That they were going to threaten our accreditation. I want to say they even gave us some time of when to resolve the issue; I'm not quite sure. Anyway, that was a problem.

Then it went to… Somehow it got involved with the NCAA. The NCAA at that time, the president of that was a former president of a university, actually he was an Iowa Hawkeye, as I recall. They had their own committee that looked at symbolic gestures. We argued we weren't a mascot; it was a symbol. They didn't see the distinction. I believe they initially ruled that then we could not be considered for regional or sectional tournaments in our sports, which is a strong move.

DePue: Now it's getting real serious.

Lamont: Ultimately… This is about the time when I'm leaving the board, by the way. So, I never voted on it. But we all saw where it was going, and we all saw we had little chance. In fact, when the NCAA committee made its decisions on this and determinations, they even said we had to away with the term, "fighting Illini."

We had to tell them the name had nothing to do with Native Americans. We had papers from after World War I [that] said it was named after our Illini who went and died in World War I.[31] Memorial Stadium was named after them, and the first reference to a fighting Illini came right after World War I. The chief didn't come into being for some twenty more years. They finally said, "Oh, maybe you're right. I guess we didn't realize it." Oh, no. You already had your mind made up. Anyway, the actual decision of the chief going away and the formal vote took place after I left.

DePue: There are just a couple of things that I discovered, doing some research here: In 1995, the U.S. Department of Education found that the chief did not violate Native American student rights. That same year, the Illinois State Legislature actually passed a bill, making it the official symbol. Do you remember what Governor Edgar did in that respect?

[31] Over 11,000 veterans returned to Urbana-Champaign campus following the World War I. Of the 20,276 Illini who had served in the war, 738 were killed. (https://archives.library.illinois.edu/slc/research-education/timeline/1940-1949/)

Lamont: Yes, at our request, our recommendation, he vetoed it. Did he veto it?

DePue: Yeah, amendatory veto.

Lamont: Yeah, did an amendatory veto. We felt policies involving universities should remain within the board, decisions. It should not be a legislative decision.

DePue: To close this subject, on February 16, 2007, long after you're out of the board, Lawrence Eppley, who, I think, was the chairman of the Board of Trustees at the time...

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: …issued a unilateral ruling, retiring Chief Illiniwek.

Lamont: That'd be about right.

DePue: I just want to throw this in here; I had the opportunity to interview one of the Chief Illiniweks, who was doing the dancing. That's Tom Livingston...[32]

Lamont: Tom Livingston.

DePue: …who was one of Edgar's travel aides.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: He was immensely proud of the opportunity to do that. Any final comments about your experiences on the Board of Trustees?

Lamont: No. It was a wonderful experience. I think I grew considerably in my own personal life. I, to this day, still value the university and what it meant, both as a student and later in life as a trustee. I think very, very highly of the university, what's its meant both economically to the state. It is the state's economic engine, no matter what anybody will tell you. It is what guides us in research, its mission being a… What do I want to say it was? What was the name of those schools? A...

DePue: A land-grant college?

Lamont: …land-grant college, which has a community mission as well. But the exposure, to me personally, of the issues and policies and concerns and problems, I think have impacted me a great deal.

I think you'll hear some of this when I later assume the position of assistant secretary of the Army. Some questions that had been put to me

[32] See Tom Livingstone's oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, https://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/OralHistory/illinoisstatecraft/edgar/Pages/LivingstonTom.aspx

afterwards were, "What prepared you to be assistant secretary of the Army?" "What in life made you qualified to assume that?" One of the very major—and by far the most—was my involvement with the University of Illinois. I'll go into more detail when we come to that.

DePue: Did this whet your appetite or change your attitude about possibly running for elective office in the future?

Lamont: Not particularly. Yeah, did I have an interest and thought about it. But I had young children. Our children came late in life. My wife had a significant position. I had no real interest in local politics, or perhaps I knew they had no interest in me (both laugh) because it was a very Republican area. I actually was approached, on one or two occasions, to consider running for Congress.

Redistricting seemed to be going on all the time, and I actually looked into it to see if it was something we really wanted to do. They'd carved up Springfield into a couple of different districts, and I was in a district which was being represented by Bob Michaels, out of Peoria. The district ran, I believe, all the way to Quincy.

Bob Michaels was retiring when he lost his position to Newt Gingrich, [who] forced him out of his leadership position. Bob Michaels was going to retire. His chief of staff was Ray LaHood; he was going to run. I knew nothing about Ray LaHood, but I also knew… Having grown up in Cass County and those counties over there, I was familiar with the Quincy area and thought I might get some Democratic support out of what piece of Sangamon County that was in that district.

I thought, It's doable. Given a fairly strong union background, a union voting population in Peoria, I thought, we might have a shot at this, particularly with a new person coming in, running from the Republican side, without the legacy of Bob Michaels.

I actually had a conversation with Governor Edgar on this. He pointed out…he said, "The problem with that is you might win, and then do you really want to go to Washington? Do you want to be like Dick Durbin, on a plane every Thursday night and Friday morning and then every Monday morning?[33] Would you take your family with you? Would Bridgett have to give up her job as director of the state library? You need to consider what you want (DePue laughs) to do if you might actually win and just go out there and have to raise money every two years."

[33] Richard Joseph Durbin is an American attorney and politician who was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1982, representing the Springfield-based 20th congressional district. In 1996, he won election to the U.S. Senate, where he now serves as the senior United States Senator from Illinois. He has been the Senate Democratic Whip since 2005. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dick_Durbin)

DePue: Was Governor Edgar talking to you as a friend or as a Republican?

Lamont: No, he was talking to me as a friend; I took that as a friend. I appreciated his advice and counsel and took it into deep consideration and ultimately decided not to do it. I was pretty happy with where I was at the university, and I was very busy in the National Guard, had a lot of balls up in the air. Between that and soccer practices and things like that, I thought, Family considerations has to come first.

DePue: I want to backtrack just a little bit here and ask you about one thing you did, I believe, in 1992. I understand that you were a delegate to the Democratic Convention?

Lamont: I was. Oh yes, that was good. The way that came about was, for the presidential election of 1992, in that previous summer, there were any number of folks seeking the Democratic nomination. There was to be rally and debate of the top three nominees, those seeking nomination, in Chicago, being hosted by the state Democratic Party. So, all the elected state officials, of course, were invited. I, being an elected state official at that time, went and attended the gathering. It was a huge convention. I shouldn't say convention; It was a huge conference, a dinner is what it was, big reception. The top three candidates, being Bill Clinton, a Senator from Nebraska, the former [U.S. Navy] SEAL...

DePue: Yeah, I can't remember his name.

Lamont: Whatever his name was. There was a third. Anyway, all appeared and spoke at the conference. Afterwards there was a private reception for state electeds and county chairs and things like that, so it was a much smaller gathering, maybe fifty, sixty people.

During that conversation, I struck up a discussion with Bill Clinton. We talked about our days. I worked as an assistant attorney general at the time he when he was an attorney general in Arkansas. I'd attended an attorney generals' meeting at one convention in which he spoke, and we had met previously but didn't know each other. We just had a nice discussion, and we exchanged cards.

But he said, would I consider being a delegate, running as a delegate for him? I said yes. Between the three, at that time, that were announced candidates, I liked him. Nobody else asked me, and I knew the likelihood of being elected was not very good, because typically your local state elected officials and municipal and county and state reps, they all tended to run on the side of the person who was going to win.

DePue: Was this before or after all the controversy started to emerge about his dealing with women in Arkansas?

Lamont: Oh, no there wasn't… At this time, there was minimal discussion of that. No, the opposition research hadn't got there yet. (DePue laughs). As it turned out, he had reached out to all those public figures that I'm referencing, and most of them said no, because they were all holding out for the guy who they believed was eventually going to get the nomination in their mind. That was [Governor Mario] Cuomo out of New York. They kept waiting for him to come out. Cuomo had been in Springfield; he spoke at the Roosevelt Dinners; he was making the rounds.

DePue: But he wasn't one of the people that night?

Lamont: No, he wasn't one of the people that night. I remember talking with Vince Demuzio, Senator Demuzio.[34] He said, "No, I'm waiting for Cuomo. I'm not getting on the ballot for Clinton." Next thing you know, (laughs) that ballot's fixed, and Cuomo doesn't come out.

Clinton had emerged then as a more popular figure in Illinois. So the Clinton delegates won, from this congressional district. Yeah, that's how I became a delegate, which I loved. I was in New York City.

DePue: Madison Square Gardens.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: Any special memories of that?

Lamont: Just in how it all works, some of the speeches… You get speeches every morning and like at a breakfast gathering of the Illinois delegation. We would have different party officials come in and give some rah, rahs, or talking points of where the Democratic Party was going and our themes and things like that. There was some pretty prominent folks, as I recall, came in. You felt you're in some pretty tall cotton. Of course, New York City is over the top to begin with [for] some folks from Central Illinois. I enjoyed the whole atmosphere. It was good.

DePue: I would imagine high energy, high level of enthusiasm.

Lamont: Very much so. And (laughs) what I liked, there's special receptions and parties going on all the time. But there was a particular place that was open 24/7 for all state elected officials. It was free food and drink (DePue laughs). It was across from my hotel, in another hotel, a huge suite. I went over there a couple of times. It'd be state governors and state officers and congressmen, and they'd say, "Who are you? Are you the attorney general of Illinois?" I

[34] Vince Demuzio, from Gillespie, Illinois, was a Democratic member of the Illinois Senate from January 1975 until his death in April 2004. During his time in the Senate, he represented various portions of southwestern Illinois. At the time of his death, he was the most senior member of the Illinois Senate. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vince_Demuzio)

said, “No, (laughs) University of Illinois Board of Trustee.” “What? What are you doing in here?” I’d say, “We’re state elected officials.” It was great because I had a little tag that had the right ribbon on it, that said I was a state elected. So, yeah, I enjoyed all that.

DePue: Did Bridgett have a chance to go with you?

Lamont: No, she could not because of our children.

DePue: So you just had to come back and tell her all these stories, huh?

Lamont: Oh, yeah. I did.

DePue: Let me change gears on you again and ask you about your National Guard career. You’re now working at the state headquarters. You’ve been there for a while.

Lamont: Correct.

DePue: I wanted to know if there were any special issues that you were working with during the 1990s and early 2000s?

Lamont: Well, of course the most important one was Desert Storm, which came into being in 1992, I believe, when the original George H. W. Bush...

DePue: Nineteen ninety… It started in 1991, I believe, was the invasion.

Lamont: Ninety one, something like that. As you recall, there were five or six months building towards the invasion. It became very serious business for all of us.

DePue: Really the first time the National Guard and Reserves had been mobilized to that level since the Korean War.

Lamont: Certainly to that level. And they weren’t even mobilized to that level in Korea, more so than Vietnam, certainly. But it became very serious, and we knew we had people going. So, as Army lawyer, our job was to prepare soldiers to go and to fight and to come home, and if they’re not coming home, to be prepared…their family to be prepared, if they did not.

We were non-stop in teaching, instructing on the law of war, which in essence comes down to treatment of prisoners; who can be in the fight; who do you shoot and who you can’t shoot; when can you shoot them, things of that nature. Although that sounds pretty basic, there’s a lot of that and the care and treatment of prisoners and so on.

Then we had to get them ready to go, which means preparing their wills and powers of attorney and explaining what all this meant to them. Particularly to eighteen, nineteen, twenty-year-old’s, this meant nothing to

them. They either weren't married or said, "All I've got's debt. They can take everything I've got." Well, you need to explain, particularly those who were married and had a young child, the purpose of the will isn't necessarily to distribute your estate; it may be to prepare someone for the custody of your child.

We had more than few young women and men who were single parents. They have to have a custodial agreement for someone to care for their child. It can't just be, "Oh well, my mom's going to take him. Grandma's going to take him." Unh-uh, it can't work like that. The court has to determine… We had to explain and advise and assist them in getting the necessary documents to place a child in custody for someone who's deploying overseas. They had to be able to get that child medical treatment, to have the authority to do lots of things in that child's name.

Then we would do their powers of attorney, to allow their spouses or… As I said, many of our young troupes were not married, but they had some assets, or there needs to be some reason why they have a power of attorney. That could even be a health care attorney. It encompassed everything. If they were wounded and on life support, did somebody have the power of attorney to handle their health care needs or sell their car while they were gone or sell their house? So, we prepared it both for the spouses or any other person they named.

These were legal documents that we had to meet with every single soldier going over and work through this. Oftentimes, we have to bring in the wives so there would be some agreement. "Who should get the kids?" "I don't know, I think it should be my sister." "I wouldn't give my kids to your sister; I think my mother." "Not **your** mother!" (DePue laughs)Numerous disagreements, because they'd never thought through these things.

So, preparing wills and powers of attorney, and of course, you always had other unusual problems, "I got a DUI. My court date is two weeks after I'm shipping out. What am I supposed to do?" We had to work through all those processes. "I'm in the process of getting a divorce, and if I'm not there I'll lose my child." These concerns were all going through people's minds. It was incumbent upon us to work with these people. There's always something going on. "I'm in the middle of a lawsuit over my construction company." or "How will I get my job back? If I lose my job, what happens to me?" We were educating them on reemployment rights.

Then we found, after they were gone, we were educating employers on the employment rights of the soldiers. We found some of the very worst examples were federal government agencies, the post office being number one. They didn't want to hire them back. They said, "We couldn't sit here and leave that job open. So we hired somebody." Or they would find a way that these people wouldn't work out. They'd already hired somebody. So, once

their lawyers taught them how to discipline these people when they returned, or find another reason for eliminating them, other than their required military service, that was a constant fight with the U. S. Department of Labor and things like that. We were very busy.

DePue: Yeah, you're much busier than just doing this job on a drill weekend, once a month, and you're not in a deployable status, being assigned to state headquarters. What status were you on when you were doing all this work, and how much time were spending doing that job?

Lamont: We would be brought on… We wouldn't be in a Title 10 federal status, although we did do some Title 10 activities because anytime you get the feds to pay for us, versus the state…[35] This wasn't just drill weekends by any means.

DePue: But you weren't mobilized, were you?

Lamont: No, not federal mobilization, no. We might be on Title 10 orders, but… it was state mobilization. The state would get reimbursed, I think, is the way it was working.

DePue: The invasion happened in August. By the time you're getting into November and December, that's when a lot of these mobilizations were occurring in 1990. Was that the timeframe when you were spending more and more time doing that job?

Lamont: During the whole time period, yes. Plus, things would come up with our deployed soldiers back here. You started getting calls from family members and wives and, "What do I do about this? Where can my kid…" Once they're mobilized, they're in the Army; they're not a National Guard asset. So, there heath care is provided by the Army. But they don't live on a post; they live in Chatham, Illinois or elsewhere. Well, where's their child supposed to get Army dental care and health care? Do I have to drive them to St. Louis, to a federal VA facility? Those kind of questions came up routinely.

DePue: How rewarding was it to be doing this kind of work?

Lamont: It was very rewarding because you really felt you were helping people out who were going through some very difficult circumstances, knowing their spouse or child or loved one or brother was overseas in a combat arena.

DePue: How many lawyers did the Guard have at that time?

[35] Title 10 of the United States Code outlines the role of armed forces in the United States Code. It provides the legal basis for the roles, missions and organization of each of the services as well as the United States Department of Defense. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Title_10_of_the_United_States_Code)

Lamont: I want to say we had about five.

DePue: Enough work to keep all five busy?

Lamont: Oh, yeah. I want to say we brought in some reservists to try to help us, but that didn't always work out. They were doing their own thing too—National Guard versus Reserve—because reservists were getting called up left and right. Our Guard lawyers would only go, typically, if they were battalion or brigade JAGs. They would go with their units.

DePue: It was a very short war. By February, March of ninety-one it was pretty much all over. Then the troops start coming back home. Did your workload drop off dramatically, or were there still a lot of things to be done once they returned?

Lamont: There's always a fair amount of things that occur in the transition back, whether or not somebody had forgotten to turn in a weapon they had picked up (laughs) off an enemy or so on, so forth.

DePue: Souvenirs are always a big thing for soldiers.

Lamont: They came back to find… The wife might have another child (laughs) that might not have been his and vice versus, all kinds of family and things of that nature, plus the reemployment concerns were a big problem, getting their jobs back.

DePue: How about the years beyond that, once we got the Desert Storm behind us? The operations' tempo for the Guard increased about that time.

Lamont: And the tempo stayed reasonably high. We never reverted back to the post-Vietnam days, in terms of training and effort and the requirements put upon the Guard. We all agreed this was for the better.

DePue: One of the things that caused some angst during this period, the mid- to late 1990s, in the Illinois National Guard, especially the Army National Guard, was the situation with the chief of staff at the time, Colonel Jim Burgess. I don't know how much you're able or willing to talk about that, but I did want to, at least, bring up the subject.

Lamont: As a JAG I was assisting him on the military defense side. He was charged with a, as I recall, a federal criminal offense, so he had his private attorneys for that. But for his counsel, within the military side, I was one of his lawyers. So, obviously I have a conflict in lawyer-client relationship.

DePue: What was the nature of the charges?

Lamont: It involved women…maybe lying to the FBI on the charges of…Was it sexual discrimination, sexual harassment on female civilian employees, things of that nature? I don't know. I don't recall, on the federal side, what else, other than I

know there some federal investigations going on. I believe lying to the FBI was one. Of course… What do you call it? Fraternalization, when a military person is involved with a younger female. That was an issue, although most of these were not military. They were civilian employees, but still he had his own issues within the UCMJ (Uniform Code of Military Justice).

DePue: This would certainly be one of the issues that you, as a JAG officer, would be talking and advising the various adjutants general, who served during that timeframe, was that...

Lamont: We had the divide, up within our legal unit. Somebody had to represent the command and advise the adjutant general. Somebody had to then work with the various defendants in this. There are more than one that got involved on the military side. Then you have stovepipe and wall off discussions with the guy sitting at the desk next to you, perhaps, because our interests, legal interests, didn't coincide.[36] That made it a little difficult. You can imagine what was going one within the higher headquarters out there too, when the chief of staff is under federal indictment.

DePue: I would imagine it affects the morale of the organization.

Lamont: Sure, it does. Sure it does.

DePue: I just want to ask you if you have any reflections—I don't necessarily expect you have—for the series of adjutants general that you would have worked with. Let's start with General Harry Holesinger, 1983 to 1991, the Air Guard.

Lamont: I did not have a lot to do with him, and I was very young at the time, a first lieutenant and then a captain. I had good respect for him, high respect for him, for what dealings I had with him, which were minimal.

He was, I'm told, as I recall, somewhat of a surprise, an appointee of Governor Thompson because he came out of Chicago and was the first Air Guard blue suiter to become head of the Illinois National Guard.[37] At that time, the number of Army National Guardsmen far exceeded, and still does, the number of Air National Guard. I think right now it's roughly 9,000 to 2,000, 3,000, something of that nature.

DePue: The next one is General Don Linn, 1991 to 1995, so he was there about that timeframe that we just talked about.

[36] Stovepipe is a metaphorical term that recalls a stovepipe's function as an isolated vertical conduit, and has been used, in the context of intelligence, to describe several ways in which raw intelligence information may be presented without proper context. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stovepiping)
[37] A blue-suiter is a military officer wearing the blue Class-A uniform. (http://www.combat.ws/S4/MILTERMS/WP0SLANG.HTM)

Lamont: I knew General Linn quite well and worked with him. I believe he had been the assistant adjutant general. I worked with him in the building quite often. I thought he did an excellent job. I thought he was a very good leader that got us through the Desert Storm situation well. He handled that well and all the internal turmoil within his headquarter staff.

DePue: Next one is General Dick Austin, 1995 to 1999. He's somebody who had come up through the political system in Springfield, I believe.

Lamont: Yes, he did. I did not know him, other than his reputation on the political side. Of course, we all knew him within the Guard. Did not know him all that well in the Guard because he did not train at state headquarters. He was in another unit that, I believe, trained at the state armory. So I didn't have a lot of military interaction with him. As I say, I knew him more, somewhat, from the local political situation. I didn't know him well, but he was good to me.

There were any number of issues that came up during his tenure that didn't reflect as favorably on him as we would have hoped. But, as I said, he was very generous with his time with me, and any concerns we had, he welcomed our input.

DePue: General David Harris is the next one, a person who had time in the legislature before he had this position, 1999 to 2003.

Lamont: I knew General Harris quite well because, before he became… Well, I knew him from his legislative dealings; he was a state representative. But we socialized a fair amount when we were on duty. He was the provost marshal, I think, internally for the National Guard and had White House experience. He had worked on, I want to say, President Reagan's staff, so we oftentimes socialized after hours or during AT [Annual Training] and shared a lot of stories. I got to know his family somewhat. I want to say he was… We had him for dinner and times of that nature, not necessarily though, when he was the adjutant general. Then it was a different relationship. It was far more formalized then. I don't recall; was he just there four years? I don't recall; it didn't seem...

DePue: Yeah, that's a four-year term.

Lamont: …that long.

DePue: Of course, the adjutants general are normally a gubernatorial appointee. So, he probably stepped down in early 2003 because a new governor and a new party came in. That was when Governor Rod Blagojevich was taking over, in 2003.

Lamont: That would have been the case, right. Colonel Thomas, Randy Thomas, came in then.

DePue: And he was there from 2003 to 2007.

Lamont: Yes. Frankly, I encouraged Colonel Thomas to seek out that position because, after General Harris and General Austin, we saw that these positions were perhaps a little bit more political than they should have been. Then some of us in the JAG circles, who….We believed we understood a little about how the politics of the world worked. We decided we were going to help; we would push someone that we thought would be a good adjutant general.

After Governor Blagojevich was elected, I had a conversation with Colonel Thomas. I knew he was interested; every Colonel wants to be a general. That's the Army for you. You wanted to move up; you want rank; you want to grow. He was interested but didn't think he had much of a chance; he didn't know anybody politically. I said, "You may not now," I said, "but tomorrow afternoon Senator Demuzio is going to be in town for an event. You are from his district." I think he was living in Hillsboro as a school teacher at the time.

DePue: Librarian, I believe.

Lamont: Both. I think they called him a librarian, but he was Special forces, wounded Special forces from Vietnam. He was a good, good commander, brigade commander. He would be a good solid guy, we thought, to serve in that capacity. After what we'd been through at Desert Storm, we knew the Guard was always going to be a player in any contingency operations that the U.S. was going to get involved in.

So, he [Colonel Thomas] in fact, went with me. We met Senator Demuzio and introduced him. In later conversation with Demuzio—and I knew Senator Demuzio quite well—he said, "What's the deal with this guy?" I said, "How many jobs have you gotten placed in Blagojevich's administration? You got anybody in there? Has he talked to you about anybody?"

"What do you mean?" I said, "Do you understand what the adjutant general of the State of Illinois does? Do you understand the number of jobs…? I appealed to his political sense. Even though many of these are federal positions out there, there are some civilian, state positions. I think there's over 800 in the state, not that they are selected politically, but some things happen, as you can imagine.

I said, "Do you have anybody else at a cabinet level or in those kind of positions?" I said, "They're all going to come out of Chicago if you're not careful. Here's someone you could promote and do a great job and there might even be some other good things come out of it for you."

He agreed, approached Blagojevich, who did not have anybody in mind for that job. Next thing you know, General Thomas is the adjutant general and did a great job, to my knowledge.

DePue: In 2003 to 2007, I think that's about the time you retired...

Lamont: I left in 2007, yes.

DePue: But I want to ask you the next one, as well, because I think you probably had a personal relationship with...

Tom Lamont shares a plane ride with his fellow National Guard Legal Officer, William Enyart, in 2008. Enyart later became the state's adjutant general.

Lamont: General Enyart.

DePue: William Enyart.

Lamont: Yes. As I say, we all, at that level then, had interest in who were to be our bosses, besides General Thomas, and those who would have a desire to take those positions. General Enyart, who worked for me as a JAG, I was his commander. We were good friends, and I knew he was ambitious and had the time and energy to do it, plus he had another MOS [Military Operation Specialty]; he wasn't just a JAG.

For the National Guard, colonel is the highest rank you're going to get, unless you are nominated through the National Guard Bureau to take one of the three, at that time, the three general officer slots as a JAG, the judge advocate general of the National Guard kind of thing. JAGs were not going to be generals, but he had another MOS, having had prior service right before college.

He also had the time and the willingness to attend the war college, because you were not to become a general otherwise[38]. At that time, the rule was you had to have not only have completed commander general staff, you had to have been accepted by and attended and completed war college to make yourself eligible to be a general officer. So, he did; he did all that and eventually became, within the Guard, a one-star [senior level commander] in a non-JAG capacity. That made him, then, eligible to be the adjutant general, if he wanted to go that far. In the meantime, he wanted to be a general, so he was able to obtain that.

[38] The mission of the National War College is to educate future leaders of the Armed Forces, Department of State, and other civilian agencies for high-level policy, command and staff responsibilities by conducting a senior-level course of study in national security strategy. The curriculum emphasizes the joint and interagency perspective. (https://nwc.ndu.edu/)

DePue: A brigade command position?

Lamont: Don't recall.

DePue: I should know, but I don't know the answer to that either.

Lamont: Actually, I don't think so.

DePue: We're probably getting close to the time you need to close up for today, but I've got a couple other things I wanted to ask you about.

Lamont: By the way, he then, of course, became a congressman, later on, a long story there too.

DePue: I wanted to ask you about your memories of 9/11, especially since that's going to factor so big to the timeframe, once you get to Washington, D. C. What do you remember about that day?

Lamont: I remember coming into my office, law office—I was in private practice at the time—and had heard something on the radio, coming in. Then my secretary arrived about a half hour later. I was working. I didn't have the radio on or anything on. She came in, "Did you hear what happened?" I said, "No." She said, "Well, this plane in New York…"

So then we turn on a radio—we didn't have a TV in our office—and we tried to find out something on the internet, but we weren't… It wasn't all newsy on the internet at that time. You used it for emails and work-related stuff. I think she raced home and got a portable TV and brought it back. We turned it out and saw the aftermath, the second plane. I distinctly [remember] telling her, saying to her, "Our world just dramatically changed. It will never be the same," once we realized it was terrorist related. And it wasn't.

Everything [was] going through my mind as, Where are we going? How's it going affect me? How's it going to affect our business? Travel is going to be altogether different. All these things are going to change, but the immediate thing was military wise. We need to get busy.

I get a call from my wife; she says, "We understand there may be a plane headed towards Chicago." At that time, she was on the governor's [George Ryan's] staff. She says, "We're all going to the command center," in the basement, I think, of the armory; I believe that's where it was. "Don't know when I'll be home. Can you get the kids?" that kind of stuff. And where do we go from here?

It was high anxiety, of course, for the next two, three, four days, trying to reach people at Washington, and Washington is dead. There's nobody moving; no planes are flying; people can't get home. I knew folks that rented a car and drove home from Washington D.C. or New York or things like that.

I was going through, I think, what everybody else in the country was going through. What's this all about? What does this mean? This is horrible. How many people got killed? The shock value was tremendous.

DePue: Of course, for several years after that—you could say even to this day—the National Guard's OPTEMPO increased dramatically.[39]

Lamont: Dramatically.

DePue: Same kind of role that you had done during Desert Storm?

Lamont: Well, I'm in a much more senior position. Now I'm actually the state staff judge advocate, so all the lawyers are working for me. We know there's going to be deployments left and right. So, yes, we got extremely busy and eventually got to the point where, which of my lawyers are going to go? Whether you were attached to... Were you a brigade lawyer or not, they needed lawyers. They were going to go. The Army made it very clear to us, they didn't want anybody beyond a major. They wanted, principally, captains and junior majors.

DePue: Did you have a desire to possibly deploy?

Lamont: Yeah, initially, I did, but I was torn. Initially I thought it would be a good thing. Later on that year, my son, my youngest son—he just turned fifteen—was diagnosed with cancer. So, I knew from there on, I did not want to leave. I was torn. But I was a full colonel, also. They did not want full colonels over there because you were going to be a brigade, running an active duty brigade lawyer slot. The active duty folks wanted those positions (both laugh) to get their battle patch.

DePue: Their combat patch.

Lamont: Their combat patch and for their resume. We don't need no stinking colonels over here. Send us captains and majors to do the work. Which, I guess, worked out.

Yeah, I missed, frankly, not being more of a part of it. Interestingly enough, I was on active duty in a AT status with the 173rd Airborne in Vicenza, Italy, right before shock and awe, right before we invaded.[40] I can

[39] The acronym OPTEMPO joins the two words "operations" and "tempo." Department of Defense adopted "operations tempo" as a measure of the pace of an operation or operations in terms of equipment usage -- aircraft "flying hours," ship "steaming days" or "tank [driving] miles." In the military way, the term became jargon: OPTEMPO. (https://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=42131)

[40] Shock and awe was the primary tactic in the U.S. plans for the invasion of Iraq. It envisioned simultaneous air and ground assaults to decapitate the Iraqi forces quickly, attempting to bypass Iraqi military units and cities in most cases. The assumption was that superior mobility and coordination of Coalition forces would allow them to attack the heart of the Iraqi command structure and destroy it in a short time and that this would minimize civilian deaths and damage to infrastructure. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2003_invasion_of_Iraq)

tell you it was… When you're in an active duty post with some people who are going to be in the fight… It was very clear when I got there; there was no guessing, because typically you'll have black combat boots. These guys had brown combat boots because they were breaking them in (laughs) for duty in the desert.

Everybody was on a two-hour recall. In my JAG offices, there people with ruck sacks and M16s, leaning against their desks because they were all going. They're on two-hour recall. You had to be able to get on the plane within two hours. Hmmm, they're serious about this.

We were advised… We, there was just me, and there was a legal assistant, female, who'd come from the Chicago office was there. She had already had orders to go active, about three weeks after we were to get back, after AT. But, we were advised, if this thing while we're here, she would probably go with them, since she was being mobilized anyway. I would be held back to fill an empty seat at the JAG office, because (laughs) they're all going to be empty.

There are only one or two other JAGs that were not assigned to the 173rd that they were part of the headquarters of the cadre there, the staff. And there was going to be a lot of work with family issues and things like that. I just recall coming in one day, and there's a lot more activity going on. "What's going on?" "USAER commander, U.S. Army Europe commander, the four-star is coming in." Hmm.

In my little barracks I as living in, there was a young officer in the room next to me. There was a barrack's operation, but as a colonel, I had my own little hooch.[41] We started talking, meeting in the shower or something like that or having a beer after we're sitting, polishing our boots or whatever. He was a captain. I said, "Who are you with?" He said, "I'm with intel." "Oh, really." I said, "What was going on today?" He said, "Well, the general's in town." I said, "What was that all about?" He said, "They're re-war planning." I had enough clearance that we could talk at the level. I said, "What's your job?" He said, "I'm to go in; I speak Hebrew. I'm Jewish, and there were some concerns that Israel might get involved, if we're going to shoot rockets into Israel, bring him in, blah, blah, blah. And there's some other things going on that involved Israeli military." He was to be the Hebrew guy. I said, "Oh, really."

I come to find out that the reason they were re-gaming this [was] they had pushed the deadline, invasion deadline, out because Turkey, these guys have found out we'd already sent our equipment on boats, and Turkey wouldn't let them through. So all the 173rd major equipment had been out in

[41] A hooch or hootch is a hut or simple dwelling, either military or civilian. (http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Glossary/Sixties_Term_Gloss_D_J.html)

ships, and the Turks said $1 billion, they can come through. That ain't happening.

So they held it off and re-war gamed how the 173rd was going to be part of the invasion. Well, what does an airborne unit do? It jumps in! (DePue laughs) But it held it off about five days, and in that five days, I rotated back. I didn't, at that time, have any idea how close it was, other than I knew it was coming. Sure enough, five days later, they jumped into Northern Iraq and for the oil fields. Had I been there… I missed that. I thought, This would have been great. I would loved to have been there; plus I love Italy too. But I wanted to be a part of it. At that level, you want to be engaged and be a part of this action.

DePue: That's what you spent your life in the military gearing up for.

Lamont: Right. And I've worked with all these guys that are going. We're talking everything, sharing stories of what we need to do and readiness situations.

DePue: Just thinking about this, as busy as the legal staff must have been, the JAG officers must have been preparing to go to war. Those lawyers would have been even more important once you got to the point to where the war's over. Now, you've got to reconstruct the country.

Lamont: It was more than the five day war—let's put it that way—that we had in the nineties. This is very extensive.

DePue: Let's kind of fast forward to 2007. What led to your decision to retire?

Lamont: My son's cancer had returned for the third time, and I had reached age sixty, anyway. The policy at that time was thirty years in service or age sixty, whichever came first. I had been extended; I received an extension. But six or seven months after I reached the age sixty, my son clearly was in the final stages of his health. We were preparing another brigade, another huge unit or multiple units, to go over, and I wasn't able to give adequate time out there. I needed to be with the family. So, I resigned.

DePue: After how many years?

Lamont: Twenty-five years and six months. I joked, as I say, at thirty-four. I turned thirty-five before I actually raised my hand.

DePue: That's a long career in the military by anybody's estimation.

Lamont: I enjoyed it. It probably worked out the best that I hadn't gone in when I was twenty-one or twenty-five or right out of law school. As we'll get into it, I was pretty current, then, when I went in as assistant secretary of the Army. I was pretty current, up-to-date, on how the world worked in the Army function, at that time.

DePue: Well, Mr. Secretary, this might be a good place for us to stop, unless you want to take just a few minutes to talk about what you were doing on the civilian side of things from about ninety-eight to the time when you're appointed as assistant secretary.

Lamont: I was primarily engaged in private practice until, I want to say 2001-2002...

DePue: I've got you as a partner at Altheimer and Gray.

Lamont: Altheimer, A-l-t-h-e-i-m-e-r, Altheimer and Gray, which was a Chicago firm, but I had to open their office downstate.

DePue: Did you have any jokes about the name Altheimers?

Lamont: Yes, all the time, Alzheimers.

DePue: I'm sorry.

Lamont: My kids referred to it as Alzheimer and Gray. That was a pretty distinguished, old, blue-blood firm. It was an eighty, ninety-year-old firm, until it went bankrupt a year after I left (laughs). That's another story.

But yes, I left them actually for a couple of reasons; primarily the reason was when my son came down with cancer in 2001, and the emotional demands and his health care demands were significant, trying to get him help. By now we're trying to get him treated…

He's being treated by the University of Chicago, which we determined to have one of the… His cancer was considered a cancer that affects young children. So there are specialists, cancer specialists. I don't want to say pediatric cancer, but it's something like that, adolescent cancer. They were specialists in that, and the number one guy, we were pretty much told, was in the University of Chicago Hospital. We'd had consultations. George Ryan had helped us out with the Illinois Medical Society, who did research for us. We were in touch with a senior guy at Harvard, who said… I think we'd shipped him the reports, because our son was deemed to be stage four the day he was diagnosed.

We all knew what stage four pretty much meant, in terms of a long-term. So we were working hard, struggling to come to grips with this and the time commitments we needed for his care. I couldn't be running around in a law firm, running back and forth to Chicago and out of town… The demands that private practice puts on you, timewise, I couldn't be bound by that. So, I sought other opportunities.

DePue: I've got you at Brown, Hay and Stephens, 2002 to 2004?

Lamont: Yeah.

DePue: Where was that law firm based?

Lamont: At Springfield, at Springfield, Abe Lincoln's firm. It's the oldest firm in Illinois, of which Abe Lincoln was a member for four years, but he couldn't make his hours. He was always playing politics. He moved a block away.

DePue: And then where?

Lamont: That's when I was asked to go over to the Illinois Board of Higher Education [BHE] as an acting executive director. It was in the Blagojevich timeframe. I'd left the Board of Trustees, and they asked me if I would go on the Illinois Board of Higher Education, which I did. We lost our executive director. We heard of some of the political people that Blagojevich was considering putting on that board, and we wanted the position filled immediately. The chairman of the board, who also had leverage over Blagojevich, for a variety of reasons.

DePue: Did you have any direct dealings with Governor Blagojevich?

Lamont: No. I had a direct dealing with one of his staff. That's why I left the board of trustees, but one-on-ones, no. So, I agreed to take that position. Actually the chair of the board was a lawyer from Chicago who first employed Blagojevich when he got out of law school, as a favor to his father-in-law, Dick Mel. When this gentleman said, "We want you to take it because…" They knew Rod [the governor], very well. He said, "We got to do what's best for the BHE. [Will you] take it as a temporary, until we can find the right qualified person in there and convince the governor where we need to go on this?"

DePue: You're not talking about yourself, here; you're talking about...

Lamont: Yeah, I'm talking about me. So, I agreed to take that position, I want to say, in 2002, 2003, maybe. I can't remember.

DePue: I've got 2004 to 2005.

Lamont: Maybe that was it. Yeah, that'd be about right because I only did it… I said I do it for a year because I thought I could get some… I would vest my state pension time then (DePue laughs) because I had time with the state. I ended up having to do it eighteen months because the successor that was coming in after me had had a health situation and wasn't able to take it until I'd gone about eighteen months.

DePue: And then you moved to be the special counsel with the University of Illinois?

Lamont: Yes, again...

DePue: Now this is a full-time position, right?

Lamont: It is. Again, I needed to have flexibility, with my son's condition. You can be a lot more flexible at the University of Illinois than you can serving as a private attorney. I couldn't do marketing; I couldn't do litigation; I couldn't do all the demands of the…Well, I did a lot of legislative work as part of my lawyering for the firm. I spent half my time in the legislature, and you can't do that if you're in a hospital somewhere.

DePue: So you're living in Springfield during that timeframe?

Lamont: Yes. Yes.

DePue: And I assume once in a while you're spending some time in Champaign or...

Lamont: Yes. I officed out at the University of Illinois Springfield.

DePue: I think that's a pretty good place to finish today, unless you want to say anything specific about that position?

Lamont: No, not really. I enjoyed it. They were very flexible with me, which I appreciated because I was just all consumed with… In fact, we eventually had to take a rent…lease an apartment in Chicago for sixty days on the University of Chicago campus, as my son had to go through stem cell transplant; you can't move them for quite some time. But since we had an office in the University of Illinois Chicago, I would spend time there. So, they were very, very good to me in that regard.

DePue: Let me finish with this question; how did it end up being resolved with your son?

Lamont: My son passed in 2007, September 21, 2007.

DePue: That's got to be maybe the darkest day of your life?

Lamont: No. By that time, it was the right thing to have happen. You go from praying that he be saved to eventually you pray that he can't live like this. He was down to below eighty pounds, and he was in a terrible situation. It was a fate worse than death. He died at home, and we were with him the whole time. It could have been worse, but it was time.

DePue: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

(end of transcript #3)

Interview with Thomas Lamont
VRT-A-L-2018-004.04
Interview Date: February 26, 2018

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Monday, February 26, 2018. This is Mark DePue. I am once again with Tom Lamont.

Lamont: Just make sure we're recording, so we don't have to do it again. (both laugh)

DePue: It's recording now, and this is going to be a very interesting conversation because we have gotten to the point where we get to talk about your experiences as assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and Reserve affairs. That's quite a title.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: Let's start off with this one, Mr. Secretary; how did you end up getting that job?

Lamont: I was fortunate in always having a desire to go to Washington. The unfortunate part of it, what drove us, was when we lost our son in 2007 after a very lengthy illness. He died at home of cancer. We both agreed maybe it's time for us to get out of this house and try to do something different and get our mind off our grief. Our oldest son was in college. There was an election coming up, and I said, "Let's make an effort, try to go to Washington" because she had had an opportunity once before, my wife that is. But it was cut short when our son was diagnosed with cancer.

To me, it looked like Obama was going to win and that there might be some opportunities. I put out the word that I would like to go to Washington, if the opportunity would arise. I looked at some places I'd like to go, positions, the primary one being what I thought I was most suited for, out of

the educational side. I didn't want to go into the Department of Education, something like that. I wanted to stay in the defense side, because I found it more interesting and probably a little bit more exciting, frankly.

I'd seen there was a position called the assistant secretary of defense for Reserve affairs. I thought, with my Reserve component background, that was probably what I was most suited for. I didn't really want a job; I wanted a position. And if I couldn't get the right position, then I wasn't that interested, didn't have to move.

DePue: I'm not sure I understand the difference. A position means that you might be able to do it on the committee or do it from here in town or...

Lamont: No, I'm saying I wanted a position that I thought carried some weight and was high enough that [it] would involve significant policy making and things of that nature, as opposed to finding a job to make money, just to make money.

I found out, when I did end up getting my job, I had a lot more people making more money than me, working for me, because they were on the General Service, the GS scale, and assistant secretaries of the Army, their salaries… All assistant secretaries in defense are set by Congress (laughs), and they're frozen; they don't move, nor did we get travel pay and locality pay and everything else that everybody else in the Department of Defense does. You get commuter pay at the Pentagon, if you live on the other side of Washington (laughs).

DePue: You mention that you put some feelers out or you made some contacts. Who were you talking to?

Lamont: I spoke principally to Senator Durbin, knowing he, being the senior senator from Illinois and had extensive background with Senator Obama and who had encouraged Senator Obama to run for the presidency, I thought my best chance was with him, and he was a friend. He was very complimentary when I spoke with him, and I think he was very instrumental in me getting that appointment.

As it turned out, I did not get the position for assistant secretary of defense for Reserve affairs, it turns out that position had already been filled. Then it came back to me, would I be interested in the assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and Reserve affairs. I quickly googled that to see what that entailed and decided, yes, I would very much enjoy that. I'm certainly glad I did.

The person who ended up with the assistant secretary of defense for Reserve affairs job, I had to work closely with him. He was a retired Marine Reserve three-star, a lawyer out of Ohio, very distinguished gentleman. I got to know him quite well. He knew of my one-time interest, and he had agreed to stay for two years in that position.

As his time was drawing short, he came to me and asked if I would take his job? He was very complimentary, and said, "Look, of the people I've worked with, I think you'd be far better suited and take my position." I said, "Thanks, but now I don't want it. (both laugh) I've just started to figure out what I'm doing as assistant secretary of the Army because it takes a while to drink out of that fire hose until you have some real understanding of what you're doing. And I was comfortable in the job, so I stayed where I was.

DePue: Did this discussion, about what job you were going to be able to get, happen between the election and the inauguration?

Lamont: Actually, I think I broached the subject before the election to him, that if, in fact, Obama was successful and if there was an opportunity and if he was willing to put my name forward, I'd appreciate that. And we had some follow-up from there on about what I would be interested in. We narrowed it down.

DePue: Who actually offered you the position?

Lamont: The deputy secretary of defense. I interviewed with that person, out of Washington. Gates, Secretary of Defense Gates, was a holdover, but he was not involved in filling leadership positions under President Obama. President Obama's nominee, or the person who was selected to be the deputy secretary of defense, DepSecDef, was the one then principally involved in the selection process, filling what we call the PASSs, Presidential Appointees Subject to Senate Confirmation.

Tom Lamont with former Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates during the latter's tenure at the Pentagon. Gates served as SecDef from 2006 to 2011.

DePue: Had you ever met President Obama before or after the election?

Lamont: I had met him as a senator. I think I met him, frankly, as an Illinois senator, but I had no real background with him because I did work the legislature in my legal and legislative capacity but didn't really know him. And only through the National Guard had I dealt with then U.S. Senator Obama because we had annual gatherings, Washington gatherings, to meet with our Illinois delegation. So I met with him, along with others of the Illinois National Guard, in that regard. But [I had] no real one-on-ones with him. I had no personal relationship with Obama.

DePue: Did you go to Washington D.C. before the…

Lamont: May 2009.

DePue: So you'd already gone, before the Senate confirmation hearing?

Lamont: I went...

DePue: You're pointing at your...

Lamont: This is when it becomes official, and that says on the 19th of May I became official. But I was appointed in early May and then went before the Senate Arm Services Committee in a confirmation hearing and then was confirmed by the Senate around the 19th of May. President Obama signed… I forget what the really called the official document. But until he signs the document, you're not there. Once he signs the document you are the assistant secretary of the Army.

I happened to be in Illinois, working at that time with the University of Illinois. I was driving to Chicago, to the University of Illinois Chicago office, when I get a call. It said, "Hey, the president has signed the document. We have to swear you in." I said, "Well, I'm in a car." They said, "When you get someplace, can you call us?" they, being the office back at the Pentagon.

I went straight to the legal council's office at the University of Illinois, where I was sharing some office space. This is in Chicago, on a conference call. [I] called in, and they swore me in over the phone because we had Memorial Day weekend coming up, and they had to have somebody in place to handle any activities that might happen. So, I swore in. Then immediately they faxed me a document in which I appointed someone, in my absence, to handle things until I could get there.

Tom Lamont's official swearing in ceremony as the assistant secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs in June 2009. The ceremony was in the Pentagon on June 26, 2009, with Secretary of the Army Peter Garen officiating.

DePue: In the meantime, were there still [President George W.] Bush people on the ground, doing these jobs, or had they left there?

Lamont: They were gone.

DePue: So there's just a huge vacuum?

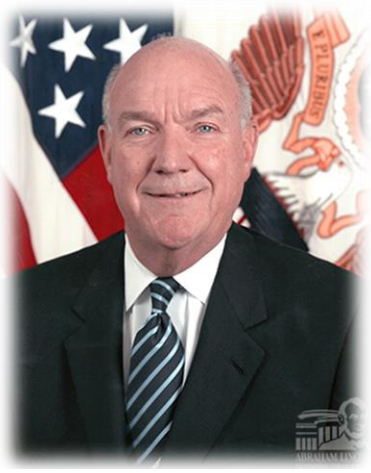
Lamont: Yes. Actually, Bush, for whatever reason, terminated many of his political appointees before he left. We don't know why because those that we later had talked to… My predecessor, I met with him, even though he was gone. I

sought him out for his guidance and advice. (phone rings) They were all very upset that they were terminated.

My guess is Bush had no idea about this, but somebody thought, We're going to stick it to Obama to make sure there's nobody there to get any work done. They did that with U.S. attorneys; commission people were dismissed out-of-hand, terminated immediately on various presidential commissions, out of spite. We don't really know. No, there was hardly anybody, any presidential appointees left, certainly in the Department of Defense, nobody.

DePue: Where did you end up living when you moved to D.C.?

Lamont: The whole thing in D.C. is to get as short a commute as possible. I lived… Initially I took an apartment within a couple of miles of the Pentagon, in Alexandria, Virginia and did that for about six months while we… The housing is so expensive there, I started looking for a condo [condominium] because we were just starting in the recession of 2009. The housing market had dropped considerably, but the rent market did not, because everybody was renting, and nobody was buying. So, I elected to buy a condo. I did, in Alexandria, Virginia, what we call the west side of Alexandria, not in Old Town, I was about five miles, five or six miles, from the Pentagon.



Tom Lamont's official Department of Defense photo, circa 2009.

DePue: Which took how long to drive?

Lamont: I went in early; I'm an early riser. So I'd usually leave my place about 6:00, and I could be there by 6:20, on a good day. I was three stop lights off of a twelve lane highway, 395, Highway 395, which exits… There is an exit right into the Pentagon, so I was on that. The commute on the way home was considerably longer (both laugh). On the way in, it was busy at 6:00 in the morning, but it was busy at fifty to sixty miles an hour, bumper-to-bumper, versus zero to five, coming home.

DePue: I've heard enough about the work ethic in the Pentagon to know that people are there at some...

Lamont: Oh, yeah.

DePue: …long hours.

Lamont: There's a lot of 04:30 types. On the Army side, my XO, my executive officer, being one of them because they all want to know, "Sir, we got to get your battle rhythm down, so we can plan our schedule," meaning, about when are you going to be here, and about when are you going to leave, so we can adjust the schedules for my immediate five or six military staff. They would never let me come to the office without one of them being there. That just wasn't going to happen and didn't, ever.

DePue: What was your typical day like? What happens after you get there at 6:30?

Lamont: I would quickly skim the daily briefing, what we call the "early bird," which was a collection of news articles that was sent out to all leadership positions in the Pentagon. They were a collection of news articles that affected the military or the Department of Defense in some way or another, so you would know what was going on in the world or the kind of calls you might start getting… "How'd you guys screw this up? What are you going to do about this?" whether it be from combat experiences, whether it'd be administrative things that were discovered, or something that came up pretty immediately, was some problems with Arlington National Cemetery, whatever the problem was of the day.

Then I also saw casualty reports every day, by 6:30 or 7:00 because we were in two fights going on at that time, with Afghanistan and Iraq. Then [there would be a] meeting with my executive officer and going through plans for the day. Usually I would have a couple of booklets, planning documents, prep documents on my desk.

So if I had a 9:00 meeting coming up on x, y or z, I would get the planning document: This is what the meeting is about. These are the issues they want to talk about. Here's who's going to be in the meeting with you. Here's who's going to be in the meeting from your staff. Here are a number of questions. And here are the slides that are going to be shown to you. Some of the questions you need to be thinking about and may wish to ask are: one, two three. And here… If it's something that you have to make a decision on, they may present you with two to three courses of action. Course of action number one does this; course of action number two does this, and course of action number three does this. It's our suggestion that you look strongly at course of action number two, for whatever reason.

So I'd be somewhat prepared for that meeting when I walked in. I wouldn't be blindsided; we sit there and look at each other. Plus we need the kind of things [that] you need to make decisions on, typically not something that's going to linger; I'll get back to you on this. That depends on the seriousness of the issue in question. I might have four or five of those meetings a day.

My first three or four months was just learning the office. It was constant briefing, constant briefing, constant briefing, as I say, drinking out of the fire hose of what my duties entailed. And they were extensive. As I recall, there are like four other assistant secretaries, but the only one that counts was manpower and Reserve affairs. It is authorized by federal legislation.

Your duties are quite descriptive and finite. It uses the term supervisor. We have supervisory authority over all Army personnel, both civilian, the Reserve components, both Guard and Reserve and active duty. Any issue that impacts personnel, you had supervisory authority or policy making authority, in particular. This ranged from the entire spectrum of military life for an Army civilian or Army personnel, from recruiting to retention to transition into veteran status to death, as we had supervisory responsibility for casualty and mortuary affairs. And we oversaw all policy of Arlington National Cemetery and anything in between, whether it was a housing issue that impacted our soldiers and soldier families, whether it was educational issues, whether it was the Army correctional facilities or prisons, in other words, training. You name it; we were involved in it.

DePue: As you listed these things, I had to wonder, did you have civilian assistance, or are these primarily...

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: …officers who were doing this?

Lamont: Civilian.

DePue: And were you able to help pick that team?

Lamont: Well, we had both. The first liaison, you have the G-1, the Army staff G-1, who is the lieutenant general in charge of Army personnel.[42] We worked very close together. His offices were immediately down the hall from my collection of offices, in the Pentagon. We would meet at least two to three times a week, in discussion… Many recommendations came through him that dealt particularly with military personnel and policy issues.

Then, within my own staff, we had six different stovepipe areas, whether it be Reserve affairs, operations and training, military personnel, civilian personnel, military management and manpower organizations. I can explain later what all that means. I had deputy assistant secretaries of the Army in each one. Most of those, in fact all of them, either were retired

[42] The G-1 develops and implements effective policy and leads programs that build sustained personnel readiness in the Army's greatest asset - people. The **G-1** takes responsibility for execution of our assigned functions and achievement of our mission in support of the Secretary of the Army, CSA and the ASA(M&RA). (https://www.army.mil/g-1)

military or very senior, long-time experienced civilian military employees, at a level beyond the GS system.

Once you go passed GS-15, there's something called the SES, Senior Executive Service. These are highly paid. They have to be approved and sworn in, just as anybody else. They carry a civilian rank of a general officer. If you're SES-1, you're a one-star. If you're an SES-2 you're a two-star. An SES-3, which is…We only had fifteen of those in the entire 300,000 civilian employees in the Army. We had fifteen or sixteen SES-3s

My principal deputy, being an SES-3, [had a] master's degree in law, National Guard twenty years retiree, six years active, a brilliant, brilliant individual who had been in the Pentagon as a civilian over fifteen years. He saved me in many respects (both laugh). He's currently there now in a very high level position, even beyond where he was.

DePue: What was your equivalent rank?

Lamont: I was a four-star.

DePue: And you're looking at your four-star mug, here.

Lamont: So you got a flag; you had your own flag for that position. That was my flag. When you went somewhere, just like any general officer, there's the Army flag on one side of you, and there's your flag on the other side, when you're on the podium.

DePue: Did you have any voice in selecting these people who are on the civilian side?

Lamont: Absolutely. Some were considered political positions, subject to approval by the Department of Defense personnel, White House personnel liaison, and some were considered purely civilian personnel… What do I want to say? full-time civilian. There's a term for it. But the designations of those offices could periodically change. For instance your deputy, your principal deputy, has always been a political position that gets approved by, as I say, the White House defense personnel liaison.

When I first got there, the only holdover in the office was the secretary of the Army. I was the first appointee of the Obama administration in the Department of the Army; I'm the only guy there. There had been no new secretary of the Army appointed. There had been no undersecretary of the Army appointed. Nobody else had been appointed. The holdover, because somebody… When I previously said everybody was terminated, the secretaries were not; everybody else that was political appointees were because you had to have people that sign off on many issues. For instance, if you were sending troops to Iraq, which we did on a weekly basis, somebody had to sign the orders.

DePue: Somebody on the civilian side?

Lamont: Yeah. Somebody who had the authority to do it in the Department of the Army had to sign them. The secretary of the Army had the authority. The orders go then to the secretary of defense, who then signs off, and the troops go.

DePue: I want to make sure I understand the significant difference. It wouldn't be the chief of staff of the Army or...

Lamont: Absolutely not. Chief of staff of the Army will, somewhere along the line, have approved it, because it will come out of Army leadership. The troops being designated, the units being designated to go. Then it goes up through the civilian chain, until it's for final approval. For instance, there are always great stories about the Bush secretary of defense (snaps his fingers) before Gates...

DePue: Donald Rumsfeld?

Lamont: Rumsfeld, who liked to question the military assignments and did so routinely. The stories of how that impacted the uniform side at the leadership level are legion out there. Where he'd say, "You don't need a brigade there. You can do that with maybe a battalion. I'm not approving that. Just send the battalion."

Now, these decisions aren't made overnight. Typically, there are months in the making when you're moving troops around in a combat AO [Area of Operations]. It may be a year or two in the making of who's going to be the follow on. We had something called the patch-chart, and on the patch-chart, that would be the division or brigade patches and their timeframe for their rotation into a combat zone. Are they in the training phase? Are they in the ready phase? Are they in the transition and move-out phase? These are months in the works.

Rumsfeld had a way of, when it got to his desk, asking all kinds of questions and routinely rejecting the plans. [It] drove everybody crazy. We didn't do that, let's put it that way.

DePue: It sounds like, when you first got there, there's this disruption of continuity. Are the military officers the ones that provide that little bit of continuity and bridge that gap?

Lamont: Oh, yeah, they're there. That doesn't change, other than within the Army's ordinary course of business in rotation.

DePue: Did you have anything in your position of helping to select the follow-on people, when they make their rotations?

Lamont: Not the follow-on people but GOMO, within my… [I] wouldn't say jurisdiction, but oversight, GOMO being General Officer Management [Office]. I did not have background in active duty personnel.

Early on, the chief of staff of the Army at the time was General Casey, had just rotated back from years in Iraq. I get a call one day, early on in my tenure; he wants to come down and see me. "Sure, come on down." I didn't know this was a big deal, but my entire office staff about passed out (both laugh). They say, "Hey, Casey's coming down!" Everybody's cleaning their desk, straightening their uniform up, because the chief doesn't come to you; you go to the chief. That's the way it works.

He has a beautiful office, large office, conference room, beautiful artwork, some original paintings that were the covers of *Life Magazine* during WWII by artists, beautiful antique desk, memorabilia from when [General Douglas] MacArthur was chief of staff. The history in the Pentagon and what's around there is unbelievable.[43]

Anyway, here comes Casey in his fatigues, just he and I, no aides in the room. Nobody goes anywhere without your aides coming with you; no aides came in the room. We shut the door and got to know each other. We had a nice talk. He said—which I wasn't even sure I even knew at the time because I was so young in the job—I had some authority, if I wished to use it, in generals of the Army selection, GOMO. He said, "We'll routinely run our recommendations for selection by you." Ultimately, the secretary of the Army was the final say on that. It was an automatic. Once it went through my shop, most everything was an automatic, from a personnel side.

DePue: And they all had to be approved by Congress, right?

Lamont: No, not all of them, three-stars and above. I said, "Sir, I don't care to be involved. I don't know these people. I trust you and your people's selection. You know more about the capabilities of the uniform personnel than I do. I don't think that's really any of my business. So, let's just considered it, you do your job as you see fit in the selection process, and we'll go from there." So, I never did get involved in that.

DePue: As far the Pentagon was concerned, we're you two roughly equal, in terms of the...

Lamont: Yes. For protocol purposes, it just depended on who was running the meeting. If it was a meeting being run by the chief, then you set at this right hand

[43] *Life Magazine* was an American magazine published weekly until 1972, as an intermittent "special" until 1978, and as a monthly from 1978-2000. During its golden age, from 1936-1972, *Life* was a wide-ranging weekly general interest magazine known for the quality of its photography. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_(magazine))

because all seating is done by protocol. If it was my meeting, he would sit at my right hand. But, we were roughly equal.

DePue: You're talking about a typical day, and you were talking about the officers coming in, telling you what meetings you're going to do and getting you all prepped for it. You get the distinct impression that, to a large extent, you really don't have control over your own schedule.

Lamont: Not very much at all, oh no. You never know what's in line and what's got to be done and what's going to end up on desk, what the timeframe is. "Sir, we need to do this. Sir, we need to do that," one thing or another. You think you have your day planned, and then there's always two or three calls: "Secretary of the Army needs to see you now." Or others like that: "Would you be available for… He needs to see you; it's important; the Chief of Staff of the National Guard's got a real problem; he's got to see you this afternoon."

You make it happen. We had way too many meetings at 7:00 in the morning and way too many meetings scheduled at 6:30 at night, as far as I was concerned.

DePue: Where did you fit in the overall Pentagon pecking order?

Lamont: This is interesting. In the Army, it's date of rank. I'm the number one appointee in the Army. I was there five months before the secretary of the Army was nominated and confirmed and the same time for an under-secretary because they would be one, two.

DePue: You're talking about date of rank that you were assigned to this position?

Lamont: As an assistant secretary of the Army. So, I had priority over all of them, any other person of that ilk, other than secretary of the Army and the under-secretary, when they came in. If the secretary was gone… For instance, until we had a secretary of the Army, we had the holdover secretary of the Army. Believing he was going to be gone much sooner, he did not wish to be retained in his position.

He was a former congressman, great guy. I really liked him. He had made quite a few plans, both on vacation and job hunting and personal business, to be out of the office, thinking he would be replaced by the May, June, July, after the election. But he wasn't. He was still there, but he still had these plans. Some of the plans he couldn't get out of, but he was out of the office.

So that I was then the acting secretary of the Army, anytime he was gone. And twenty-eight different days (laughs), I was the acting secretary of the Army. I barely knew where the latrines were, down the hallway.

DePue: I would imagine that you're still trying to figure out all the acronyms that are floating your direction.

Lamont: I don't know that I ever figured out all the acronyms, even though we had a dictionary of them (both laugh), oh yes. And everything is a PowerPoint presentation, everything.[44] You never got anywhere near a meeting that you didn't see PowerPoint slides. How you'd get tricked every now and then, the general Army leadership offices, they knew how to do that. They'd flip a couple of amended slides in there, you hadn't seen.

One of the rules is, you never do staff work in a meeting. When my staff came in, they better have positions ready to go. If there was differences and all of a sudden something's going on at the table where there's disagreements. There [were] maybe six or eight of us at the table. My XO or my principal deputy would say, "We do not do staff work at the table. Don't come in here and take up the assistant secretary's time until you have a position in which you wanted a determination. Everybody out." The first couple of times I heard that, I said, "Hey, good man."

DePue: Who was saying that?

Lamont: That would either would be my executive officer, who was a full colonel, West Point, the whole bit, or my principal deputy, if he attended that meeting. Usually it would be someone for one of those six areas that I'm talking about, usually the assistant or the deputy assistant secretary of the Army for whatever, whatever that position was, and whoever was bringing a position to us, typically from the active component, some policy change, some recommendation, one thing or another. They would have worked it up and would have prepped me with my prep book before we had the meeting.

Then, if there were tough decisions that had all kinds of implications that might make it a change in Army regulations, Army policy, then we would get a Form 5 [Army staffing form], and it'd better have been checked off by about five different people, including Army legal counsel. In other words, you'd already know that this has been approved for legal purposes, things of that nature, or that the chief of staff had signed off on it. Everybody on the chain had signed off on it.

If it was something coming in from the Department of Defense, for instance, the under-secretary of the defense for personnel and readiness… That's who I might technically report to outside of the Army, was the under-secretary of defense for personnel and readiness. All the various personnel

[44]Microsoft PowerPoint is presentation software that has crept into the daily lives of military commanders, reaching a level of near obsession. The time spent on PowerPoint generated charts, graphs and bullet points, has made it a running joke in the Pentagon. Commanders say that behind all the PowerPoint jokes are serious concerns that the program stifles discussion, critical thinking, thoughtful decision-making, and ties up junior officers. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft_PowerPoint)

people from Army, Navy, Marine, Air Force funnel through the under-secretary of defense for personnel and readiness, who then reported to the Secretary of Defense. Once a month, we all met with him, but we would get policy recommendations coming in...

DePue: Met with...

Lamont: The under-secretary of defense for personnel and readiness. But sometimes there were things we couldn't live with, in the Army. The Air Force might be pushing something, and he might have bought off on it or wanted our response to it. It might be the medical community, because medical command was under my auspices, as well, since it involves personnel. There was always all kinds of healthcare stuff going on. If it had to do with commissaries, PXs, all that was somewhere under our bailiwick.

We would concur or non-concur. If you non-concurred, there was hell to pay from the Department of Defense. "What do you mean, you're non-concurring?" "Hey, here's why:" boom, boom, boom. "Here's our recommended changes." Or "We recommend it just go away." We would fight when we had to fight. We didn't want to non-concur, but if it had what we saw as a negative impact on what we were doing… Or it might be in conflict with one of our policies or regulations, but not necessarily in conflict with the Navy or somebody else.

We had different uniform regs, for instance. One of the major issues we got in right off the bat was requests for exemptions on the uniform policy. Typically it was for **religious** purposes. For whatever reason, the Army always got these, primarily (laughs). They always came to us.

For example, a big issue was we had some Sikhs, Army officers who were Sikhs, and they were health care providers. They sought an exemption to wear turbans in the Army. The way it came to us (laughs) was principally because they sued us because there was a long standing policy for good order and discipline and all that. There was uniformity in the wearing of the uniform. So there was a discussion; it came to us in the form of a lawsuit, being represented by the National Sikh Foundation or something.

DePue: But these are uniform military personnel.

Lamont: They're in the Army; they are in the Army. We investigated it, and we found that in, for instance, in the Vietnam War, there were all kinds of Sikhs in the Army, and they wore turbans. We have pictures of a full colonel, with the eagle rank insignia on his turban. But in the late eighties, there was a decision made, I think by the chief of staff of the Army, that did away with all exemptions to the uniform, all waivers of the uniform policy.

But the suit that was filed in federal court said we were failing to follow the religious accommodations statute that was really aimed at federal

employees, that they couldn't be discriminated against for religious purposes. We argued that really didn't apply to the Army, and if it did, there were reasons why we should be exempted.

Anyway, we thoroughly looked at it. We determined that, since this has been done in the past and we found nothing in our records to suggest that it caused disruption or anything against good order and discipline, we didn't have a particular problem with it, of the turban.

Then the suit changed, in that they wanted exemption to grow a beard. We had problems with that because we didn't think the protective mask, "the gas mask," would properly seal over a beard. That made them non-deployable in a combat zone, if they couldn't wear a gas mask. We don't really allow anybody, or very few exceptions in the Army, to be retained if you're a non-deployable asset.

Again, we had this investigated thoroughly. What we found out was, hey, we have Special Forces scattered in combat zones, and they wear beards to blend in with the occupation and the citizens. There's a special mask that they have, and they can wear. But it costs like $2,500, and it deteriorates within like eighteen months. But we really couldn't use… It was difficult for us then to say just, "You're non-deployable because… Well, you **are** deployable."

DePue: Did you have a similar situation come up with female soldiers who wanted to wear a burka or perhaps even have a veil?

Lamont: Later on, we did. When I left there was some of that still going on. There was no decision. We knew we had female soldiers who put the hijab on because, in Afghanistan, we found out that the cultural norms did not allow a male to enter the house, an Afghan residence, unless there was a male inside. So, if it was only females inside the house, you couldn't go in and see if there were any bad guys. You couldn't inspect the house.

So we had females—who, of course, weren't supposed to be in a combat zone to begin with—they would approach and search the house. We found that some of them were more comfortable wearing a hijab. This came up, and what are we going to do about this? "Hey, they're not allowed to do that." We left that to the commanders in the field. Later it was brought up; someone **formally** requested an exemption for religious accommodation to wear a hijab wherever they were, in country, in the U.S. That was still going on when I left.

We would get these one after another (both laugh). We had a particular unusual, orthodox rabbi who wished to wear a beard. He wasn't in the Army. He wanted a waiver before he would join the Army. We said, "We don't do things in advance. You have no standing. You're not a soldier." But, the

National Jewish Federation filed suit against us. Again, we're back in federal court. They have the former solicitor general of the United States representing them. The next thing you know, we have…

For us, we were always represented by the Department of Justice. The Department of Justice said, "Hey, we don't want to get into this. Figure out what you can do here." "What do you mean figure out we can do? The rule's a rule. Only a soldier can request an exemption to the uniform policy. See you later. We're not involved in this case." "Ah, you're not going to defend us."

We did not want a federal judge making Army uniform policy decisions. Of course, you'd sit there and talk to your Marine counterpart, and they said, "We don't have these problems. (DePue laughs) They ain't joining our place." "Oh, okay." It seemed like our service got all these (both laugh). It wasn't the Air Force; it wasn't the Navy; it was us.

DePue: Mr. Secretary, welcome to the Pentagon, huh?

Lamont: So we called the secretary of defense general counsel, a guy who later became the secretary for homeland security, but at that time he was DOD general counsel. We call him and say, "Hey, we got to have some decisions here. What's the Department of Defense position on religious accommodation of uniforms? He said—over a period of time—literally said, "Do what you have to do; just don't get us in trouble." (both laugh)

Tom Lamont, fourth from the right, was one of many Pentagon staffers who attended a Rose Garden ceremony in 2009 where President Obama was also present. Army Vice Chief of Staff Peter Chiarelli stands next to Lamont.

We did not feel that was the definitive direction of any type. Some months later, Secretary of Defense Gates put's out an action memo saying, "There will be a decision on defense-wide uniform policy NLT [no later than] October." which is like three months away. That went to all the key players in the Department of Defense. He was saying, bring me a definitive policy that will cover all services because I don't want Army doing one thing and the Navy doing another thing and the Marines doing another thing, because the Marines objected, of course, to anything and everything, always, always. Of course, October came and went; we never, ever got one, ever.

DePue: What I wanted to do is just very quickly go through the senior positions that were there when you first got there. Then as get into the timeline, we'll talk about some of the changes.

You don't have to respond to anybody in any of these in particular, but if you want to, that would be fine. Then I wanted to get into some of the specific issues that you guys dealt with. Secretary of the Army at the beginning was Peter Green?

Lamont: Geren, G-e-r-e-n, Peter Geren. I think I'm spelling that right, but I know I'm pronouncing it right.

DePue: That's my mistake. He was only there through September of that first year, it looks like.

Lamont: Correct.

DePue: And then it was John McHugh who came.

Lamont: John McHugh then was the Obama nominee that was confirmed.

DePue: And you got along well with him?

Lamont: I did; I liked John. He was a Republican congressman, been former head of the House Armed Services Committee, and he worked hard. He was well informed, then, coming in. He had never served in the military, but he understood the policy, budgeting and the big picture items of the Army, which is what I liked about him. And he let us do our work.

DePue: Of course, the secretary of defense we've already mentioned, Robert Gates.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: Did you have much of a working relationship with him?

Lamont: Not, directly. We did many of the Army positions that then went forward to the secretary of defense, but typically, Secretary McHugh was the liaison to Secretary Gates.

DePue: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen?

Lamont: Nothing to do with him.

DePue: That's what I figured. But obviously, you did with General George Casey.

Lamont: We did. The chief, we had a good relationship; we worked well together. We tried not to get in his way, and he was comfortable working with us. We didn't always agree, but he was never the problem.

The general Army staff is who would float things up through us before they'd ever get to the chief. In other words, the G [General] staff, what's called the G staff, the G1, personnel; G2 intelligence, G3 plans. There's three, five, seven is what's it called, plans, operations, and training, all the way up to G8, being a fiscal officer.

They would routinely bring issues to us, or we would go to them and say, "We need direction here. We want you to consider x, y, z." We didn't always agree, plus we had to deal with many issues that affected our non-commissioned officers, our field people. That would be through the sergeant-major of the Army, who always had his own (both laugh) ideas of how the world worked. He was about the equivalent of the chief of staff of the Army, as far as we were concerned, mostly as far as anybody else is concerned too.

Often times, unfairly, we got to be known as the brick in the Army, that we would say no to a lot of the recommended changes. But there were always some things that they didn't think about. They didn't understand the fiscal impact. They being whoever Council of Colonels—colonels do all the work in the Pentagon, by the way, on policies, Councils of Colonels.[45] It floats up through the G staff, and every G is a three-star.

Then there's another person, called the director of the Army staff, the DAS. He is the direct liaison to the secretary of the army. So there's always a whole chain of things to go through before any internal policy or Army regulation is changed or including legislative.

If we needed congressional authority or some kind of a legislative change, there was a DOD committee, and I represented the Army to our legislative changes. Our Army legislative liaisons would come in and walk me through requests. We might get a request from Germany, where some soldiers want a change in authority to allow their children, who are coming of college age, to be authorized a trip back to the U.S. to look at colleges, for instances. That **was** one. It required a congressional change, a change in the legislature. So, we'd go through all these.

Then once a quarter, we would sign off on the ones we should go forward on. There'd be recommendations; the Council of Colonels says, "Recommend approval." Somebody else recommends approval; the National Guard says, "No" on this one. Then we would have to make a decision if this was something we felt we should take to the office of the secretary of defense to put in their legislative proposals for the year.

There's an annual book of things coming out of the Secretary of Defense's Office in which they are going to go to the Congress and recommend various changes. Most of them are not serious issues. They don't

[45] The Council of Colonels is a task force of senior officers created by the Joint Chiefs of Staff that reexamine the strategies for war. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Mansoor)

have a great deal of impact. They might be technical changes. Then they would make a decision. Is this one they want to fight for? Is this one they want to put in the bank? When I say bank, the book of legislative proposals that DOD is going to recommend be changed.

DePue: What you've been describing, up to this point, is a very bureaucratic structure.

Lamont: Oh, yes.

DePue: Does it work?

Lamont: Gates used to say, "Twenty-two people sign off on something before it ever gets to me."

DePue: Does it work? Did it make sense?

Lamont: For the most part. There were many times when we would wonder, Why does it take forever to get this stuff done? Why does it take 189 days to get a civilian employee hired, which was the average when I got there? I sort of have the policies of this. Some of that policy is directed by Congress in how you put out a request for employment and what you have to go through and veteran's preferences and internal stuff. We finally were able to get down to roughly eighty-some days, as the average to get a position filled in the Army because this was just…

I was beside myself. I said, "No wonder we don't get the kind of people we want here. They're not going to wait 189 days. If they're that good, they may have other opportunities, or they can't afford to wait, particularly if they're unemployed, versus just trying to make a transfer." It's unbelievable. A lot of that is driven by congressional requirements, not by internal requirements. But, yes, bureaucracy is huge. It is huge. (both laugh)

DePue: And obviously, in many cases, a point of frustration for you.

Lamont: We all try to make changes, and we pick away at it. But remember, on the Army side, the guy that may have made that recommendation and has set his priorities, he's gone in two or three years, including the chief of staff of the Army.

The chief of staff comes in, always, "Here's my top ten priorities. Get to work." Of course, everybody drops everything, if you're in the uniform side, because you're going to deliver for the chief. Oh, six months later, he's gone (both laugh). It may not be that bad, but it's at all levels too, not just the chief level.

DePue: You've already mentioned this. Obviously, you came in, and the United States was involved in two wars.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: So, the OPTEMPO must have been crazy.

Lamont: It was crazy. It was crazy. Again, when I refer to the patch-chart, we're always trying to get it right. You get the troop movements going. Deployments were driving us crazy. The constant deployments and re-deployments we knew had a significant impact on our soldiers and soldier families, the demand on our forces, particularly after Afghanistan kicked off in a much larger way. You had significant personnel, both in Iraq and Afghanistan. The ongoing deployments… In late 2008, 2009, the demand upon our forces [was so great that] we didn't have the people. We didn't have a sufficiently sized Army to meet those demands.

What took place internally, then… The Army is made up of the operational side and the generating side. The generating side being the Army folks in the schools, in boot camps, the teachers and the trainers and the medical community, those kind of things. Operational side, meaning… It's easy to say, you're combat operational folks. We started having to move—this took place really before I was there—shifting of generating personnel into the operating force, which left big holes on the generating side.

What do you do if you don't have authority to get more people? Congress sets the authority, the numbers on your recruiting, your recruiting base, because then they put a number on it. They budget for 500,000, for instance. Of course, you never know exactly how many are going to leave, whose times are up. Some will stay and re-up; some won't. Then you have to anticipate, through your recruiting process, what your fill needs will be.

Well, you never get it quite right. If you're 10,000 over… Our rule of thumb is 10,000 soldiers equal $1 billion in salary, equipping, housing; they're $1 billion. You do your best, and then Congress looks at you, because if you go over, you got to go back and ask for money. You better be able to prove to Congress that you did your best.

Anyway, we were running out of soldiers. On the generating side, what do you do? You start contracting it out; you fill them with civilians, which is what we did. All of a sudden, we have many more civilians coming in to take up positions, while our green suiters went to war. They shifted over to the operational side and deployed.

But our deployments were going so rapidly that we said, "Something's got to be done." These guys were coming home and might be home eight, nine months a year, max. But in that year, the last two or three months, they're not at home; they're training to go again. We saw terrible disruptions in the families. We saw people leaving the Army in mid-careers because they couldn't do that stress anymore with their families.

So, we did a couple of things in 2009, at the recommendation of the chief of staff of the Army. [That] was to increase our manpower, on a one-time only basis. So we asked for 22,000 additional soldiers to be authorized by Congress.

DePue: What timeframe are you talking about here?

Lamont: Two thousand and nine. We wanted it filled by early 2010, mid-2010. And all this is drafted out and PowerPoints, you can imagine. How would you do it, and would incentives be required? In other words, if we couldn't recruit naturally, would we have to offer pay incentives to encourage people to come into the military?

As it so happened, because of the recession that the country was going through, the unemployment among the civilian population went way up. At one time, I think, national unemployment was 10, 12, 13 percent. So, we had a lot of people coming out of school, both high schools and colleges, that didn't have jobs. After six months of living in Daddy's basement, they'd knock on our door. So our recruiting all of a sudden turned around. We were able to fill our 22,000 easily, within our requirements and at the highest level and the lowest number of recruiting waivers.

Typically, recruiting waivers were based on behavior issues, meaning was there a criminal matter involved? We certainly would never take people who had a felony, but misdemeanors or a drug charge or something like that, as a young teenager, sometimes led us to give waivers to allow that person to come in. By the end of 2010, we had zero behavior waivers. Check the Marines and see what they had. They had a lot (both laugh).

Our only waivers were then health waivers. Maybe the eyesight wasn't right, but it could be corrected. Maybe they had asthma as a child, which was always a never waivable offense, but it became waivable. Even our number of waivers went way down. Our number of high school graduates was by far the highest we ever had; over 99 percent were high school graduates. Our number of college graduates coming in was quite high. And our retention, actually then started leveling off too.

DePue: I wanted to give something of a historical background here, and it goes right into what you've been talking about. Back during the Vietnam War, of course, you had draft Army, and you had people were deploying to combat as individuals. They would be there, and by the time they got to the end of that one year or two, they're counting the days.

Senior brass, after Vietnam, decided that was a bad way of doing things, for a variety of reasons. A couple of the changes they had… Obviously, they had to now live with the volunteer Army, which is what you've just been talking about, but they decided to go in future wars with unit

rotations instead individual rotations. Along with that, to get to the number of units they needed, they're now going to have to rely on much more on the National Guard Reserves than they ever did before.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: I'll turn it back over to you to reflect on the value of unit rotations versus individual rotations…in the OPTEMPO for the Guard and Reserve, as well.

Lamont: When I came in, although I knew a little bit of the background, I'd never been involved, in my National Guard days, with any discussion or thoughts on unit versus individual. But when I got in my position, I came to understand the history of unit assignments and the value of people training, living-training together and going to war together, versus individuals coming in without knowing the guy on your left or the guy on the right.

Most everyone in the Army… The Army is, in fact, a profession. You have professional soldiers now, and they strongly concurred in unit assignments. There's never a complete unit, of course. And we had a rule… The chief had a rule that no unit deploys below 90 percent fill. When I say that, it was very common that units would only be 75, 85 percent ready to go because, one, you had injuries; two, you had people who they were redeploying. They might be in a wounded warrior capacity but were still being held awaiting medical authority to go back in.

This became a real problem, in that some folks were maintained in that capacity for over a year because of a backup in our health care issues. The unit couldn't replace them because they were still on their roster. They're just in a holding pattern in the health care side, but they were non-deployable because there was eventually going to be a decision whether those people were put out as veterans or retained as soldiers, depending on what the VA [Veterans Administration] and others decided.

You always had the kid that would break his leg, issues that would come up that would create holes in your units. You had people whose enlistments were…and they didn't stay. The minimum was 90 percent, so oftentimes we sent units overseas less than 91, 92 percent filled. They weren't even full when they went over.

To try to combat this, we started filling units at a 110 to 115 percent, so we could get them out the door above 90, 90 or above, if you understand what I'm saying. Oftentimes we might have 20 percent of holes there, that we had to fill.

DePue: That kind of goes back to your comment before about plussing up the overall strength by something like 22,000.

Lamont: Yes, that happened all the time. Then we would reach out to the Guard, in particular. The Guard went as units as well, but we would also go to the Guard and Reserve and ask for volunteers, in particular, MOSs. We got units deploying, they need an eleven bravo [infantryman], or they need a communication specialist; they need any number of things.

Oftentimes we had people in the Guard who, A, needed a job or, [B], desired to get into the fight, and their unit was not in the ready. I talked to more than a few soldiers in Iraq who'd been there four to five years. They kept volunteering because they never had jobs when they went home, and if their family situation allowed them to do that, they would just sign on with somebody else and redeploy, redeploy on an annual basis.

DePue: How about the OPTEMPO? You mentioned the units, and it sounded like it was primarily from the perspective of the active component. Was the same kind of thing going on with the National Reserve?

Lamont: Oh yeah, absolutely, absolutely because we had easily 80,000, 90,000, I think, National Guard folks on active duty orders at any one time. I think we got up as high as 80 or 100 at one time, 110. As of today, this being February of 2018, I saw on an active duty roster last week, over thirty some thousand Reservists are on active duty orders. That doesn't mean they're necessarily in Iraq or Afghanistan, although some are, but they're on active duty assignments. Most are deployed, whether they may be deployed to Italy or Germany, Japan, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq; they could be anywhere.

DePue: I'm trying to figure out how to ask this question. Are the regular Army personnel that you dealt with during the time you were there, were they accepting and supportive of the Guard and Reserve?

Lamont: Those who had been to war with them were very much so because, by the time our Guard soldiers went out the door, they went through a considerable train up. In fact, this became a problem. Many of them… By 2009 and 2010, usually you had at least a year's notice that you would be going.

That was the one thing that we always pushed, from the Guard perspective, that they have—so their employers could have—notice that this was going to happen, not a total disruption that was immediate. That wasn't always the case, but most units going over, particularly the brigade size or even company size sometimes, had a year's notice, where they would train up. Oftentimes, they would go to the Joint Readiness Training Center… I'm getting a little in the weeds, but no brigade goes over, typically, without doing a thirty-day rotation in the JRTC, Joint Readiness Training Center.

The Guard personnel that would be going with their active duty component would then try to train with them. It obviously just makes sense, again, to train as a unit with the people you're going over with. [We] couldn't

always do it. There are always problems that come out, so it's not 100 percent by any means, but you'd get them ready.

DePue: Did you ever encounter any anecdotes or stories, that you can recall, of—

Lamont: Let me finish the other part.

DePue: Go ahead.

Lamont: When I saw they were most accepting, not always though; there were issues. I'm saying, primarily from folks who did actually go to war with them, older Army personnel, who only knew of the Guard from their history in the seventies and eighties, post-Vietnam, where they really looked on these weekend warrior-types in very negative ways.

Much of that… Some of that was probably justifiable, but the readiness standards had changed quite a bit, and once you got in sector, nobody knew necessarily that you were Guard or you were regular Army. They came back far more accepting. But there were incidents that came up, even in my position, where we found evidence of…where somebody put up a sign reflecting poorly on weekend warriors or calling them names or one thing or another.

We tried to harshly discipline (both laugh) those situations when it happened, let's put it that way. So, it wasn't 100 percent, but it was far better than it had ever been before and for the right reasons. The Guard **was** better than it had been before, not perfect, but better.

DePue: There was probably an awful lot of people who were coming off active duty and going into the Guard and Reserve.

Lamont: Yes. We actively recruited those people, of course. We wanted their training and experience, instead of having to grow our own. We strongly, and still today, push hard to have inter-component training. We strongly recommended, on our Future of the Army [Commission] recommendations, that active duty components serve some time in the reserve component and reserve component folks serve some time in the active duty. They would go back and forth, be it the company command level, the master sergeant level, or any of those.

DePue: Is there any significant difference between the challenges you would face to recruit an active duty soldier, versus somebody from the National Guard and Reserve?

Lamont: You had to deal oftentimes with state requirements. We had to be careful. We had our own rivalries going on too, because everyone's after the same soldier. The Army recruiter, the National Guard recruiter and Reserve recruiter, they're all after the same soldier. This was driving us crazy too, because each

had a recruiting budget, and they're all going after the same person, and they all had different offices, all throughout the country. We said, "We're paying rent here, here and here, and you are all after little Bobby Snuffy in Virginia High School."

DePue: So, you're not even talking about the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps recruiters?

Lamont: Right. We had inter-service rivalry between our three components, active, Guard and Reserve, and we had budget issues too. We tried our best. I think the active duty folks got certain incentives that the National Guard folks didn't get for recruiting, which led to some later problems and indictments (both laugh), because they put a policy in place; you got a bonus in the Guard if you got so many people to enlist. There were issues involved that I won't go into, but [they] involved millions of dollars and jail terms.

DePue: I wanted, just in the general sense, to talk about the quality of the soldiers you saw being recruited, the quality of the soldiers, from your experience, that you saw serving our country?

Lamont: I saw, again, from the statistics, our data statistics on the waivers and the education, they went way up. One, I think there was a sense of patriotism. There was a sense that the Army was a good place to go or the military. There was a purpose to joining the Army. [Given] that, along with the recession and the unemployment concerns, we were able to get people that we had not ever gotten before at those kind of levels. So, we were pleased.

What was a disturbing trend, over my five years, was the physical condition and, to some extent, some other issues that impacted our recruiting, to the extent [that] now, today, roughly 70-some percent of the typical eligible—within our age cohorts, say at eighteen to twenty-six—are not eligible to come in the service because of drug, physical conditioning, one thing or another. They're not eligible to come in.

We saw that trend moving in that direction, back in those years. A lot of it has to do with weight and physical conditioning. But now, more and more states are moving to open marijuana, not just medicinal marijuana, but open marijuana. For instance, in Colorado, where we have a major installation, Fort Carson, besides our Air Force Academy being there, every eighteen-year-old who comes in has to answer the question, "Have you ever smoked dope?" That used to be an absolute killer. Now it's not so much. You go to Washington State, where Fort Lewis, Washington is home of almost forty some thousand soldiers, it's an increasing problem, in that you're concerned. So standards are being changed somewhat to accommodate society today.

DePue: I would assume your office also dealt with issues like periodic drug tests that were required in units?

Lamont: We did, but they were pretty much set in place when I was there. Everybody had them. In fact, my first day in the Pentagon, I was drug tested.

DePue: Was that a policy or just a random occurrence?

Lamont: No, it's policy. Nobody comes (both laugh) in the Pentagon without getting a drug test. I'd had my share of drug tests in the National Guard, but oh no, you don't go in, and you are accompanied (both laugh) to make sure there's no problems with that.

I tell you also, another growing problem today is our tattoo policy. The policy has always been no tattoos below the sleeves. So if you're wearing the Class B uniform, which is a short-sleeved uniform, there was no exposure to tattoos and none above the neck. Society is changing, and our demands for soldiers are changing, so I wouldn't be surprised that there are not further accommodations being made in that regard. The Marines already did away with it. They don't care. If you're warm and up right, you can be a Marine.

DePue: Boy, you're taking some shots at the Marines here.

Lamont: Only being honest. (DePue laughs)

DePue: I wanted to get into some specific issues I believe your office would have had to deal with during the time you were there. I believe that the case. If not, we can just move on quickly. June of 2009 was the timeframe when—

Lamont: "Don't ask; don't tell."

DePue: No, Bowe Bergdahl was captured by the Taliban.[46]

Lamont: In '09?

DePue: When he was captured.

Lamont: I was thinking it was later than that.

DePue: He was released in 2014, and that's when it really made some news.

Lamont: Right. I don't recall the time. I recall the event of his capture and the turmoil inside the Army and in my office as well, as we were trying to get it straight, what actually had happened. Of course, this happened with any soldier that

[46] Beaudry Robert "Bowe" Bergdahl (born March 28, 1986) was a United States Army soldier who was held captive from 2009 to 2014 by the Taliban-aligned Haqqani network in Afghanistan and Pakistan after he deserted. He was released on May 31, 2014, as part of a prisoner exchange for five who were being held at the detention center at Guantanamo Bay. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bowe_Bergdahl)

would have had an issue of capture or something in particular happening to him.

We knew relatively soon that he had probably gone AWOL [Absent Without Leave]. I say that because he had packed his gear and left it with a note, as I recall. He'd taken nothing with him. I believe there was a note or some other indicator saying, "I'm leaving." That was it. I also think that some of his fellow soldiers were concerned about him anyway. I think they believed him to be a little different. [He] had been acting somewhat odd. So we felt his capture was probably more a result of him leaving voluntarily than being captured in a combat-related mission.

DePue: You're dealing with some very senior military personnel in your office, but I wonder what the attitude was among those, about an incidence like this, where the assumption was that he had gone AWOL.

Lamont: I think it was not a "He's a bad guy" kind of thing. That may have come later, after we learned more. I think, now, we thought he was perhaps a bit of disturbed young man, who had issues that may have been brought about as a result of his having maybe PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder] or something he had acquired in a combat zone.

We were more concerned about his condition and not… I didn't see that with senior folks that I dealt with, anyway, maybe others, but I did not see that. I think it somewhat changed later, when the full story came out.

DePue: November 5, 2009, Fort Hood shooting, Major Nidal Hasan.[47]

Lamont: Yes. This sent reverberations throughout the Army, very serious. The mood in the Pentagon was so shaken, seriously, it was palpable, absolutely palpable. How could this have happened, from one of our own? The Army sees itself, as I'm sure most services see themselves, the Army sees itself as a family. This was a family event, then. How could one of our own allow this to happen? He was a graduate of the Army's medical school, which I oversaw, as well. Getting a Muslim doctor is hard in the first place, the rarities. As we got into it, it looked like we had helped him along in his medical career, to insure that he was able to pursue and graduate with a medical degree. We had him repeat some courses.

DePue: Were you actively seeking a Muslim officer for particular reasons?

Lamont: Not necessarily. I say we, the medical command, values diversity, just as we do with chaplains. We want rabbis; we want Protestants; we want Baptists; we

[47] Nidal Malik Hasan is a former American Army Major convicted of killing 13 people and injuring more than 30 others in the Fort Hood mass shooting on November 5, 2009. Hasan was a United States Army Medical Corps psychiatrist who admitted to the shootings at his court-martial in August 2013. He was sentenced to death. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nidal_Hasan)

need Muslims. We have all sizes and shapes in the Army. And sometimes, particularly, if you're going to have someone in a combat zone that might have to deal with wounded prisoners, a Muslim might be more appropriate to working with that individual. So, yes, we need all sizes and shapes.

This had a very traumatic effect inside the Army. Then the commission was… A committee was put together by the secretary of defense to investigate what happened; how did it happen; what lessons could we learn from this, and what do we have to do, particularly, on internal security. My principal deputy was assigned, taken from me for sixty days, to run that committee because he was recognized throughout the Pentagon as one of the top people in this regard.

Six to eight months later they came back with any number of recommendations. I went to… This is a bit of an aside, but this is such a…more than a thorn but such a black mark within the Army. When he went to trial, he demanded to grow a beard, in keeping with his Muslim faith. That's not allowed by a military soldier. He had no waiver for religious accommodation. As I recall, the judge allowed it for purposes of the trial, but when he was found guilty, he was taken to Leavenworth where he was required to conform to Army regulations. He, of course, had been wounded, and he was somewhat incapacitated in his mobility. But he was restrained, and he was shaved.

I happened to go to Leavenworth later, not for purposes of seeing him, but to see our maximum security facility. He is in solitary confinement, I believe, for life, without parole. I think there are twenty-two or twenty-four in a row right there. There's one slot, under the door, they slide the food through. I think he's allowed out one hour a day, and that's it. It's going to be a long life.

DePue: This was a military trial, a court-marshal?

Lamont: Yes it was.

DePue: And the death penalty did not apply in his case?

Lamont: Death penalty did apply. He was not given it. I'm not sure about that. He may have been given the death penalty, but there… The Army has not executed a soldier since the 1980s, actually before that. But we have someone who has a death sentence, that's been incarcerated since the 1980s, has never been executed. We now have any number of those, and maybe that's the number I'm thinking of, twenty some. I don't think it's that many, but we do have a number who have received death sentences. In fact, this was discussed within my office.

Since it came within my responsibility of the Army correctional center and its policies, I said, "Why haven't there been these executions because we

have people who've been sentenced to death?" Well, by legal mechanisms and stays and all that and, I said, "If we're not going to carry out that policy…" I tried, frankly, to step back from any personal feelings I might have one way or another. I said, "If we have a policy that authorizes this, but they're never going to be carried out, then perhaps we need to review the policy or seek to carry out the policy." I asked that there be some effort on my staff to do something here.

There was no desire (both laugh) from anyplace within the Army or outside, to our civilian bosses, that this be pursued. And it wasn't, so nothing ever happened. In the Pentagon they figure, if you ignore it long enough the problem will go away. I think that's what they did with me. I wasn't hot to absolutely have something done on this.

DePue: In Major Hasan's case, there apparently lots of signals that were missed by various people in his chain of command, that he had been emailing Iman Anwar Al Awlaki, that he had made some slides and presentations he was giving, where he was obviously pretty sympathetic with Jihad.[48]

Lamont: That I'd heard of, but I'm not sure we were aware, even though the FBI may have intercepted some of those emails, I'm not so sure at what levels the Army was made aware of his private emails.

DePue: Do you remember any of the policy changes that were made to address some of those oversights?

Lamont: Not definitively. There were a lot more made on internal security and camp and post security, on possession of weapons and things of that nature.

DePue: One of the things that became part of the big public discussions that went on afterwards was the Obama administration's decision—I assume that's where it came from—to call this workplace violence instead of a terrorist attack. Can you address that?

Lamont: No, I don't recall there being any great internal debate. Where it ended up in my office was, those who were wounded, are they entitled to the Purple Heart? Did they obtain their injury in a combat zone or within the requirements for Purple Heart? You had members of Congress, I think, introducing legislation that would give them a Purple Heart. I really don't recall exactly what happened. The Army argued against that. So, I guess that goes to your question, was this a terrorist event or was this something other?

[48] Anwar al-Awlaki was a Yemeni-American imam. U.S. government officials allege that, as well as being a senior recruiter and motivator, he was centrally involved in planning terrorist operations for the Islamist militant group al-Qaeda, but have not released evidence that could support this claim. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anwar_al-Awlaki)

DePue: Why would the Army argue against it being called a terrorist attack?

Lamont: I don't think they considered it a combat related injury. I think they considered it similar to a soldier off-post who's involved in an altercation or a bar fight or is shot for some other reasons.

DePue: Sir, we were just talking about the death penalty, and the Army would prefer that that not be pursued, I suspect, because of the political turmoil that would be gotten into when you went to actually pursue that aggressively. I would think this was the same case. There was lots of political grief that the administration, at least, was getting over that decision.

Lamont: I think that's probably the case, yes. But fortunately, we weren't directly involved in any of that. It would be at a much higher level than us, either secretary of defense, secretary of the Army or beyond them, quite frankly.

DePue: I'm not sure this next one fits neatly into your bailiwick, but early 2010, an intelligence analyst by the name of Bradley Manning, who'd been in Iraq in 2009, it's discovered he's disclosing 750,000 classified, unclassified sensitive military documents to Wikileaks.[49]

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: That one fell in your category (both laugh)?

Lamont: Only the fact that it was an Army person. But within our bailiwick, I think our questions were, one, how did this guy ever get through the required clearances to have access to this information, given his education level?—There had to be a psychological profile for someone typically put in that position—then two, the internal security of…because I think he was able to smuggle… I think he took them out on CDs or how he transferred the information on his computer. How was that allowed to get out of a secure environment? None of us could figure this out.

Again, he appeared to have shown issues of instability previously; some people were aware of it. None of us had any idea, at the time, that he was going through his own personal issues on his sexuality, for instance. We later came to find out that his involvement with a boyfriend, that there was a break-up, and that he was emotionally distraught. Lots of different things came together, given his instability in other ways, mental instability. But he is out at Fort…Well, he's not now, (laughs) but he went straight to Fort Leavenworth.

[49] WikiLeaks is an international non-profit organization that publishes news leaks, and classified media provided by anonymous sources. Julian Assange, an Australian Internet activist, is generally described as its founder and director. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WikiLeaks)

DePue: He pled guilty to ten of twenty-two charges. I think that was in 2013 that he was convicted.

Lamont: Yes, and it was considered horrendous inside the Army, of the information that was lost. Now, how much of this was exaggerated by the powers that be, I don't know. But there was widespread relief among my shop because this is very serious, what we lost in terms of information.

DePue: Both his case and Hasan's case get to the issue of granting security clearances in the first place. Did your office have any oversight over that process?

Lamont: No.

DePue: That's strictly in the civilian side, the—

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: Another piece of legislation in 2010, repeal of "Don't ask, don't tell."[50]

Lamont: Yes, which is bigger than any of these other issues, as far as the impact on our time and effort.

DePue: Let's start with this one, sir; what was your personal feeling about it, going into the office?

Lamont: Well, I had dealt with it somewhat, as a National Guard lawyer. Although I don't recall… We only had one incident that was clear that we had an issue with one of our soldiers, one of our lawyers in fact, who'd only been with us a little over a year. The way it worked out was, "For the good of the Army, you need to go away." He asked to go. He came to a point where he didn't feel he fit in the Army.

He was married and had children and was undergoing tremendous emotional issues and problems at home. He had a political job, outside the office, of a fairly high level. He was doing none of us any good, either himself or the Army or the National Guard. And we sought permission to allow him to be discharged from the Army. He was not charged with any offense. He was not kicked out. I don't actually recall; he either got a general discharge or a medical discharge. But he needed to go away, and he said, "I want to go away."

Personally, I had no other… I didn't have a real position on it. I thought it was kind of dumb, frankly. I guess I grew up more in age where we were a bit more accepting of sexuality, as long as it didn't impact your job.

[50] "Don't ask**,** don't tell" (DADT) was the official United States policy on military service by gays, bisexuals, and lesbians, instituted by the Clinton Administration on February 28, 1994, when Department of Defense Directive 1304.26 issued on December 21, 1993, took effect, lasting until September 20, 2011. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don%27t_ask,_don%27t_tell)

So, when they wanted to do away with it [Don't ask, don't tell], our concentration was, how is it going to impact the Army?

DePue: As I understand, there had been some consideration of it, but not much. Then President Obama in his 2010 State of the Union Address just kind of through it out there. And the military had to really hustle after that.

Lamont: Secretary [of Defense] Gates, then, said, "We're going to do this, but we're going to do it in the right way." Again, they formed a committee. We wanted to find out what the military thought of this. There was a big difference. We had an on-line survey, which I ran. We hired people to create all these questions and—

DePue: For Army personnel to respond?

Lamont: Army personnel, everybody, Private Snuffy on up. And he could do it such that it was non-identifiable; it was on-line. We required the powers that be, the commanders down the line, you get your people to respond to this thing. We wanted legitimate responses. It didn't have to be 100 percent, but we wanted good numbers.

Our survey showed most people could have cared less, the younger you were. The older you were, you grew up in an era where you're not as accepting. So, we were worried about the older military personnel. But if you're older, then you're usually a professional, and you're a lifer, so you follow orders (both laugh). And that's pretty much what happened, without there being any serious incident. We were afraid that there would be incidents.

Again, there was a DOD committee put together. Again, my principal deputy was in charge, and he and the G-1 of the Army and two other of my people, my deputy assistant for military personnel and my sergeant major, they went to Japan; they went to Germany; they went to Iraq. They had these sessions with all kinds of people, to try to truly find out: What's going on here, and how will it impact you? What 's your feeling about this, and how best to go about the changes? Were there policy changes, in addition to just the overall policy? Did we have any other internal regulations to change, which we did, tons.

DePue: UCMJ [Uniform Code of Military Justice] would even have to change, would it not?

Lamont: Yes. And how many discharges did we have in the past of people who got dishonorable discharges, versus general discharges, on the grounds of homosexuality? Guess who started appealing those cases, even if it was ten or fifteen years later? And guess who handled all military records, personnel records? My office did!

What do you do? You have to examine every single one of them. Was this the only reason that person was discharged, or was he just a bad actor, a bad soldier, and this was the easiest way to get rid of him because he was gay? If that was the only reason, then he was entitled to have his records changed, particularly if it was a dishonorable. The newer they were, they're general discharges.

But there were some folks going… Depending on where you were, you could have got a dishonorable. That carries with it lots of other lifelong implications. So, all of a sudden, I've got an Army staff that's inundated with all kinds of other issues, going back years and having to handle them on a case-by-case basis, in the thousands. It's not like I have 1,000 people working on this, in military boards and personnel office. I probably had about 150, but they do everything in there

DePue: I might want to just walk over there and close the window, if you don't mind? I'll get it.

Lamont: Okay.

(DePue closes a window)

DePue: That makes a difference.

Lamont: Yeah. Everything from Purple Hearts to Medal of Honor or anybody who's seeking a change in their military records from WWII or anything else, it all goes through that office. Then all of a sudden, you have to stop because you've got 14,000 folks that want their discharge changed. It took a lot of work, just from the administrative standpoint.

It turned that the integration of the policy was much less troublesome than what was anticipated. Some of this, I'll give credit to Gates, because he spread it out over six, seven, eight months for this to happen. Everybody, by then, had accommodated the change in their mind and had settled. It was going to happen, no big deal. Then, of course, everybody's story was, oh, we always knew this person or that person could certainly well have been gay, but as long as he or she did their job, we didn't care.

We had other implications that came up later though. The first one was, we had a National Guard female colonel, who was appointed a general, who has risen in rank. General officers go to a week or two week training area, and you bring your spouse. You're allowed to bring your spouse because a spouse has to learn how to be a spouse of a general officer as well, and what's expected of you. She did (both laugh), and it was a her.

DePue: And these are more senior people, who are more inclined to have a different view of things than the young kids?

Lamont: It didn't come from a viewpoint; it came from, "Sir, what are we going to do?" The legislatures never changed their definition of marriage. The Congress adopted the definition that marriage is between a man and a woman. And all of a sudden, we have somebody coming with a legally married spouse from a state that allowed marriages. But it's going to be in noncompliance with federal law.

"Lamont, what are you going to do with this (both laugh)?" "Mr. Secretary, don't screw it up, whatever you want to do. Secretary of defense, general counsel, what do you want to… Don't screw it up, whatever you want to do." I said, "Then we're not doing anything because, if this is a test case by somebody, we're going to end up reading about it. The people over on Pennsylvania Avenue may not be real excited about this, if we bar them, even though we may have a legitimate reason to bar them because of compliance with federal law, the definition of marriage." I said, "This is not right. We obviously have changed internal policy within the Army. They're welcome to come."

They did, and there was not a single incident that came out about it. I never received a single report about an objection to it, never received any of it. Now, maybe it just didn't get to me, but I don't think so. I think I would have heard about it. It might have made a column in the local paper, out at Fort Sill or somewhere. Never, we never got a problem.

DePue: It seems like a lot of your challenges in your job were because of societal norms changing in the timeframe that you were there.

Lamont: Yes, and then how was the Army to adopt or to adapt to societal norms? Absolutely. I'm sure you're going to get to another one, women in combat.

DePue: Yeah, that's coming. August 22, 2013, Bradley Manning announces that she is Chelsea Manning.[51] Then shortly thereafter, the expectation that the military pick up the tab for hormone therapy or those kinds of things.

Lamont: It didn't really come until a year or so later. I was on my way out by then; I left in late September 2013. We'd got wind that there might be such a request, but it didn't take place under my time. There was a question of whether or not we're going to put he or her in general population.

DePue: General prison population.

[51] Chelsea Elizabeth Manning, born Bradley Edward Manning, is an American activist and whistleblower. She is a former United States Army soldier who was convicted by court-martial in July 2013 of violations of the Espionage Act and other offenses, after disclosing to WikiLeaks nearly 750,000 classified, or unclassified but sensitive, military and diplomatic documents. A trans woman, Manning released a statement in 2013 explaining she had a female gender identity since childhood and wanted to be known as Chelsea Manning. She also expressed a desire to begin hormone replacement therapy.

Lamont: Yes. There was discussion with… He was still a he at the time. There some thought from personnel down there that to protect him, we should put him in solitary for a while. We didn't think that was necessarily fair, nor did he request it. So, we said, "No, he'll go in general population."

DePue: This is also a question that came up after your departure, but I wonder what your personal feeling is about enlisting people who are transgender, who might have the expectation that the military should pick up the tab?

Lamont: I don't know that I have a problem with any individual who wants to serve. I do have a problem if people expect us, the taxpayer or the Army's budget, to pick up any physical, medical cost to enhance or perfect their sexuality. I don't know that those are the same thing. You want to serve, come in and serve.

You have issues that require medical treatment, unrelated to something that took place within the military? Then, like anybody else… You want a tattoo; go pay for a tattoo. Do you need any other cosmetic changes? You pay for it. I would not say this is necessarily cosmetic, but in some respects, it is, in that it was something you brought to the Army. In other words, it's one of those conditions that were already there. I'm not sure we should be… If you'd be in the Army ten years and all of a sudden, over time, you may have determined that you're transgender, that might take some more thought. It's not just a black and white issue, I don't think.

DePue: I think this is April 10, 2011, General Martin Dempsey becomes the new Army chief of staff, but he's not there very long because he moves up to be…

Lamont: One hundred and seventy days.

DePue: …chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. So, in September, General Ray Odierno comes in.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: Any comments about either of those gentlemen?

Lamont: Marty Dempsey had been commander of TRADOC, Training and Doctrine Command. As a result and given my position, I worked with him quite a bit in his previous Army capacity. I really liked him; what a gentlemen. Then we had some personal involvement.

Some people aren't aware of this; Marty Dempsey came down with cancer of the throat. In personal conversations, he knew that a member of my family had gone through this. He approached me individually once and told me, privately, of his diagnosis, before it was generally known within the Army. I worked with him, privately, on what he should anticipate.

Fortunately, the cancer was deemed to be at a stage that it was curable or at least treatable. I said, "What your family is going to go through…" and recommended he needed some support groups, where he might want to make sure he had adequate medical treatment and second opinions and all the things we all go through, perhaps, when we get that kind of diagnosis. We had some private discussion and emails, going back and forth on this.

For instance, he was going to lose his ability to digest food for a while. I don't know if we really need this on tape; this might be considered private. He was going to have to have a stomach tube to be fed. My son had had that. I said, "Don't worry about it. It's not as bad as you think it's going to be." Let's put it that way.

DePue: How about General Odierno?

Lamont: Let me go back to Marty. Four or five months later, three or four months later, all of a sudden, he comes in my office in the Pentagon. He clearly has lost a lot of weight. I said, "Marty, what are you doing back here? How are you doing?" He said, "I'm doing pretty good, really. I finished my treatment. I have some other things I have to do." I said, "What are you doing back here? And you're in a Class A uniform. [You] haven't been over to the White House, have you?" because we needed a new chief of staff.

He said, "As a matter of fact, I have." I said, "How did it go?" He said, "Well, he said he was interviewing me for both chief of staff of the Army or chairman of the Joint Chiefs. I said—I knew it was really chief of staff for the Army—"Marty, this is great." Next thing you know, he got it. I said, "Are they all familiar with your medical and all that?" He said, "Yeah."

DePue: So this thing with the cancer, that had happened **before** he was appointed Chief of Staff of the Army?

Lamont: Yeah, he was still at TRADOC. I always thought he'd be a perfect chief of staff, and we were worried that it was career ending, or we were worrying that it was beyond that. But he came through it in pretty good shape, lost a lot of weight and had to do lots of things and some serious operations and jaw and teeth and things like that. But he came in, did a heck of a job. Next thing you know, 170 days later, he's appointed chairman of the Joint Chiefs. I could tell you a story about that, but it's probably more of a private conversation of him being…

DePue: There's a teaser.

Lamont: …of how he was informed that he was to be the next chairman. I have his coin, right over here somewhere.

DePue: Very good. Now are we ready to go to General Odierno?

Lamont: Yes, all right. I'm good for probably about another twenty minutes. So General O comes in. I did not know him. Well, I take that back. I'd met him when he was commander of forces in Iraq. I went to Iraq, and I'd met him there. But, otherwise, [I] did not know him.

He was very imposing figure, about six-six, shaved head, big guy, and I'm guessing he had to be 240 or so [pounds]. I don't know how he made weight, but when you're chief of staff of the Army, maybe that helps. A very smart, intelligent person. His son had served, was a West Point graduate who had lost an arm in Iraq, through an IED [Improvised Explosive Device] explosion. He felt it all, as many longtime Army folks do, when their sons and daughters go off to war. He has seen the good and the bad. Good guy, I liked working with him. In some respects, he kind of pushed back from civilians. I think he saw us sometimes, again, as getting in his way.

Oftentimes the way it works, [between] the chiefs and the people that they surround themselves with, it's not what we should do; it's what the chief wants. "Well, the chief wants this." "Yeah, I understand, colonel, the chief wants this, but we have to look at the second, third implications of what this issue or policy the chief wants." We'll do our job, and sometimes we have to say yes—we hope we can say yes—and sometimes we'll non-concur and say no. That's just the way it is. "Well, the chief wants it." (DePue laughs) "Well, it doesn't all work that way."

With Odierno, as a opposed to Dempsey and Casey, he tended to take less counsel from those around him, of his senior military staff. That may be an unfair comment. Because he was such imposing and intimidating figure, I'm not sure they offered him advice and counsel (both laugh). They may have just saluted and soldiered on, "Yes, sir, we'll take care of it." without perhaps offering to guide him or counsel him on some implications of what he might be asking.

I had that conversation with him a couple of times. "I wouldn't this. Had I known this, I would never have done it." I said, "Sir, that's where your staff needs to work with you on these things, before it would ever come to my staff. We don't want the extra work. If it was killed up in your office, we wouldn't had to have dealt with it." I had those discussions with him. By then, I'm in my third or fourth year in, so I was much more comfortable talking to four-star generals who are six, six and pound the table (DePue laughs) every now and then.

DePue: Well, you're a four-star general equivalent; you can pound the table on occasion.

Lamont: I didn't pound, but I wasn't beyond having direct conversations with them. I thought they were pretty accepting. We had a regular schedule. Secretary of the Army, at least once a month, had to regular scheduled breakfast of the

assistant secretaries, legal counsel and the chief. We'd all go to breakfast, and we'd have an internal…no staff, there would just be six or seven of us. We talked, about a lot of things.

DePue: I assume that they restaurant was in the Pentagon itself?

Lamont: Oh, yeah. No, we never went out of the Pentagon. That would take all kinds of like deployment orders (DePue laughs) and cars and staff and people to go out front.

DePue: Did the Pentagon have a decent restaurant to go to?

Lamont: Pentagon has ten or twelve restaurants, but we would eat in the secretary's dining room.

DePue: Oh.

Lamont: The secretary has a dining room, and there is a… Every service has a general officers' mess. That includes SESs [Senior Executive Services] because they're general officers. They have your credit card on file; they're well appointed, and they're done very well. But the secretary has his own private dining room.

DePue: That does harken back in the days it was the biggest office building in the world, huh?

Lamont: Twenty-seven thousand people. We have our own Blockbuster store.[52] We have banks, candy stores, restaurants, at least three McDonalds, cleaners; we have a luggage store. It's like a shopping mall. In fact, we call it the mall; go down to the mall.[53] There's all kinds of stores because you may be working so hard you never go home. If you have to get a present for your wife's birthday, you've got the candy store and the flower store and the jewelry store right there.

DePue: We're a lot of guys, a lot of folks, there who just slept overnight sometimes?

Lamont: Oh, sure. The road, Highway 395, to my house… I often had to go downtown. I shouldn't say often, but it wasn't unusual for me to have to go into D.C. for a night event or congressional dinner or something. I would park at the Pentagon. I never wanted to drive in D.C., so I'd park in the Pentagon and take the metro, because they had a metro that leaves underground there. I

[52] Blockbuster LLC, formerly Blockbuster Entertainment, Inc. is an American-based provider of home movie and video game rental services through a video rental shop, DVD-by-mail, streaming, video on demand, and cinema theater. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blockbuster_LLC)

[53] McDonald's Corporation is an American fast food company, with restaurants all over the world. It was founded in 1940 as a restaurant, operated by Richard and Maurice McDonald, in San Bernardino, California, United States. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McDonald%27s)

might come back 9:00, 10:00 at night, and there's still about a third of the parking lot full.

We worked twenty-four hours a day because we were all around the world. The Army literally is in 152 countries at last count. There may only be an engineering group; there may only be some civil affairs folks, ten or fifteen people, but we're actively in 150 some countries in the world.

DePue: I think the public doesn't even begin to comprehend that fact.

Lamont: The public has no idea.

DePue: This next item probably doesn't take too much discussion because I don't think it applied to you, in particular. May 2, 2011 was the day we heard that Osama Bin Laden had been killed on a raid.[54] Any comment on that, just from—

Lamont: No, I think there was a certain enjoyment and excitement within the building because he gets much of the credit for our invasion of Afghanistan. (Lamont whispers: I must have scratched my glasses, darn it.)

DePue: July 1, just a couple of months after that, we got a new secretary of defense, that's Leon Panetta.

Lamont: Leon Panetta, yes, right over there.

DePue: There's the picture on the wall.

Lamont: Yeah. I, again, had about the same amount to do with him as I did with Gates. I thought Gates was a very good secretary of defense. I thought Panetta was a very good secretary of defense. My one little aside for Panetta, and my one concern about Gates, is we rarely saw him. Some of us believed, as presidential appointees and senior people in the Army, we ought to have occasional gathering, just to talk. It just never happened under Gates, even though I knew there were Christmas parties—there was always an annual secretaries Christmas party in the Pentagon or something like that—to my knowledge, we were never invited.

Then when Panetta came it… Let me back up. I mentioned before, there's a White House personnel liaison in the Pentagon, who typically is responsible for assisting you or helping you or placing political level appointees in your office, throughout the building, in the appropriate political spots. My first two years, there were four different White House liaisons, personal. They came and went. They're always young, moving on to

[54] Osama bin Mohammed bin Awad bin Laden, also rendered Usama bin Ladin, was a Saudi Arabian jihadist who founded the pan-Islamic militant organization al-Qaeda, through which he planned and coordinated terror attacks around the world. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osama_bin_Laden)

something else, particularly the first year. I think we had two or three the first year.

Then, I believe it was the second year, we went for over six or seven months; there was nobody in the position. I still had a position that I wanted, a deputy assistant, one of my top six people. I wanted that filled. I had a person in that spot that I wanted the designation, and I couldn't get it done. But I needed him to be able to sign as a deputy assistant on much of his work, versus someone sitting in the capacity of that.

There were other reasons too. We have what were called Schedule Cs. They tend to be young, recent law school grads or something or sent in. They do lower level…not political stuff or work, but they may be political appointees. They take up a lot of work. They do a lot of work that then doesn't go to some of my staff. They relieve them of lot of administrative detail and things like, if we're doing statistical data and things like that. We wouldn't get Schedule Cs. We need these people, but there's no White House personnel liaison for, I think, the largest federal agency.

Bill Daley gets named chief of staff to the president, and about a month after he's in the office, six weeks or so, I'd seen Senator Durbin. I'd made some comment to him, because he had asked, "How's things going," blah, blah, blah? And I said, "Fine. I wish… Sometimes we can't get the people we need in our office because we can't get a sign-off through White House personnel; there just inefficiency." I said, "I know Bill Daley. I ought to give him a call." And he said, "I'll be seeing him another matter. Do you mind if I mention it?" I said, "Oh, no, please do." Later he tells me, "I mentioned it to Daley. He said give him a call sometime."

So I called him. I called over and made an appointment. He said, "Yeah, come on over and see me." So I went to the White House and met with him. This is great (laughs). I thought, I can't go to the White House. I need to at least tell the secretary of the Army I'm going over to the White House to meet with the president's chief of staff (both laugh). I said, "Mr. Secretary, by-the-way, I'm going over to the White House." He said, "Just please let me keep my job for now. Don't take my job yet."

I did the meeting, and I explained to him the situation, and we had a new personnel person within a couple of weeks. They all tend to be young; they tend to come out of somebody's congressional office, who's congressman or somebody's pushing these people; they're always young thirties or something. So we got one, and she was pretty good.

Where I was going with this, when Panetta was then about come, near Christmas time, I don't know, four or five months later, we get a blurb, a blast that White House personnel is going to hold a cookie bake on Friday

afternoon about 3:00, and Secretary Panetta's going to come. "We want everybody to come." But it's $35.

I was not having a good week, and I was steamed. So I wrote back, I said, "You mean I've never even met Panetta. I've never been invited to the White House Christmas party. I didn't need a job when I came out here. I'm not a Schedule C thirty-year-old. I don't want to pay $35 to have a cookie and a Coke, just to meet the secretary of defense. This is nuts." I said, "I gave up a good job and significant amount of difference in pay to move away from my family to come here, and I got to get this? It will be the only time I'm going to meet secretary of defense as a presidential appointee, Senate confirmed?" I said, "Don't think it's just me. There are a couple other folks of my ilk who have said the same thing."

I immediately get a blast, "Oh, we didn't mean that!" I copied the chief of staff of Panetta, who's the guy on CNN now. He writes me back too, "Oh, we didn't mean any of this." I said, "This is my understanding of where we're coming…This is baloney." "Well, the money was just to pay for the drinks. You know we don't have any money to do stuff like that."

I said, "I'll buy my own Coke, thank you, and I'll make my own cookies. But there no reason the secretary of defense should not be having periodic meetings with his political appointees in the office, so he can talk to us, so we can talk to him. He's never heard any of our issues or problems." A month later, we start having meetings. I didn't go to the cookie bake either (DePue laughs). I said, "Well, give him my regards, but I'm buying a package of Oreos on my way home."

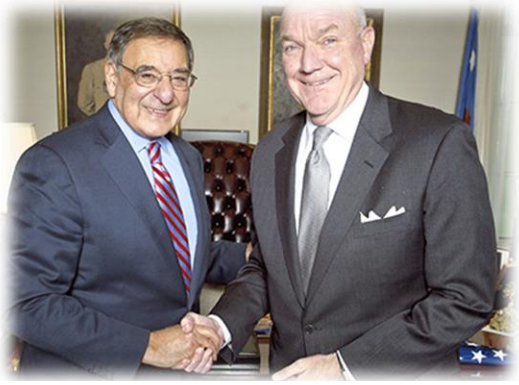
DePue: It sounds like the message was received.

Lamont: We started having these periodic meetings. There'd only be like sixty or seventy of us in there. I think there's sixty-four political appointees in the entire building, subject to Senate confirmation, the undersecretaries of defense, my ilk. And they were really good. And he was good. We'd do them in a small auditorium. He'd ask questions, and he would thank us and respect our seventy-hour work weeks. We traded a lot of information. It was very informal, very informal.

He brought his dog to work every day, in fact, Commander or whatever the dog was. He'd go out and walk his dog, with about four security guys behind him in the Pentagon yard. (laughs) I really liked Panetta. I read both of their books. Both of their books had some things in there that weren't

quite right that came out of my shop, [that] I suggested Panetta should change once.

DePue: It's interesting you should say that because I was about ready to go into an issue where I was going to quote from Robert Gates' book on it. This might be where we finish off today because I know you're needing to move on.



Assistant Secretary Tom Lamont is pictured with Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, who served in that role from July 2011 to February 2013.

August 27, 2011 is the day that Walter Reed Medical Center closes, but I think it was long before that, there was a lot of discussion about it. That was BRAC [Base Realignment and Commission] apparently had recommended that it be closed in 2005, closed and moved to Bethesda? But in Gates' book, it was because there was a *Washington Post* series that was written in 2007…

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: …and it described "…squalid living conditions endured by wounded warriors at Walter Reed. This series documented the bureaucratic labyrinth faced by soldiers who were in recuperation. Building eighteen, where a number of recuperating soldiers were housed, is rife with mold, filth, leaks, soiled carpets, rodents, cockroaches and over-all shabbiness." It sounds like this might have been one of the things that took some of your time?

Lamont: All of which was true. Fortunately, that took place before me, and the efforts and policy changes to remediate that issue was pretty on line when I got in there. We hadn't made the move yet, and I was in the old Walter Reed several times to meet wounded warriors and meet the staff there since MEDCOM, Medical Command, was, again, another personnel operation, arguably, within my area of responsibilities.

DePue: Not your decision. But it is such a historic place; why the decision to move it rather than rehab it?

Lamont: There was a lot of internal fighting, I'm told, that took place between the services. The Navy had a fit because going over to Bethesda is a Naval hospital, and all of a sudden Walter Reed is coming on-line. Well, the Congress and others decided, one, we should be more joint and two, to build a separate building would be far more costly. Why don't we just add on to Bethesda Naval Hospital, which made sense. But the Navy was very upset with the Army honing in on their territory. So there was inter-service rivalries,

left and right, even though the decision had already been made to build the building there.

Then the Congress determined, and the Army recommended, that we build a housing unit for families of wounded warriors to stay there. Then, [in] some sense, when their spouses are being treated on a daily basis—so they wouldn't have to leave, but didn't take up hospital beds—they would move them over to the housing facility.

What you are talking about, with the mold and all that, was… What existed at Walter Reed were housing units, next to the hospital. The Navy strongly objected to there being housing units for Army or wounded warrior personnel there. But Congress said, "We don't care." They made the right decision, and they built it. But the Navy fought tooth and nail.

The Navy immediately gets authority to create Bethesda as a naval base. So it became Naval Base Bethesda. They were in charge of everything inside the perimeter. They wanted authority to be able to say yea or nay, other than what Congress requires themselves. It's all Navy at the gates; everything is Navy. Now it's a big fight.

Then, who was going to be in charge? [In] surgery, who's going to be in charge of this unit, this unit, radiology? Typically by rank, right? In the Army, the rank is colonel, typically, of those in charge of those various medical departments. In the Navy, I think, it's a lieutenant commander, an O 5. (DePue laughs) The Army ranked them all. Next thing you know, the Navy's having a fit because the Army's in charge of all the medical departments. But this is just one example; it goes on and on and on.

I go over to see a doctor for a regular check-up over there, and he knows who I am because there's something called executive medicine. He shows me, he said—this was a piece of paper—"This is what just went around today." It was the signage that was going out in front, "Naval Base Walter Reed" (both laugh) or something. This was an Army guy. He just goes nuts.

But the Navy seemed to go out of its way, initially, to poke a finger in the eye of the all other services, particularly the Army. And then, who's going to run—there's something called the Capital Area Medical Center. It's a purple, meaning all uniforms are involved. Then there was… Who was going to be the three-star and the two-star? It was a big fight. Every chief of staff of each service put forward a person they nominated to be in the senior positions. We put forth the surgeon general and everybody did that. The Army didn't get it.

Air Force got the first one, even though it has nothing to do, typically, with many casualties, or they don't run medical facilities. Army and Navy run facilities; the Air Force doesn't. Then the two-star would be Navy, and there'd

be another two-star that'd be Army; it's all rotating. Internal service rivalry, which I got in the middle of because we had all these meetings over with the under-secretary of defense for health affairs. I represented the Army in all those fights. But it's—

DePue: Is there still a medical facility that's called Walter Reed?

Lamont: Yes, at Bethesda (both laugh). I think it's called Walter Reed at Bethesda or something like that. I've been there. I've had surgery there. I got to spend some time there.

DePue: Oh, boy. I'd imagine it was quite a drive just getting there.

Lamont: Even from Alexandria it was. Trust me; I had to do an emergency drive there once, in the middle of a Saturday night. It's about thirty minutes.

DePue: Is that where we need to finish off for today?

Lamont: Yeah, we do, probably should. It's 4:00.

DePue: Thank you very much, sir. This has been a stimulating discussion to get some insight into how the Pentagon works and maybe sometimes doesn't work as well as we had hoped, but things get done.

Lamont: I don't think it's as bad as some people think. We have our issues, but everybody in there—when I say everybody, I mean universally so—they work hard. There's no clock punching, and they're all pulling on the oar to do the right thing. I never felt better about working with people in my life that had the same mission in mind. Are we good?

DePue: Good way to finish. Thank you, Sir.

Lamont: All of which is true.

(end of transcript #4)

Interview with Thomas Lamont

VRT-A-L-2018-004.05

Interview #5: March 20th, 2018

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Tuesday, March 20, 2018. This is Mark DePue, the oral historian. Today I've got my last session with Tom Lamont.

Lamont: We could only hope (laughs).

DePue: Good afternoon, Sir. Yeah, you definitely want it to be the last session.

You have one of the longest titles of anybody I've ever interviewed, assistant secretary for the army for manpower and reserve affairs.

Lamont: Correct. That's because, after the Congress created my position, the Army internally created three other assistants, one for installations and environment, one called civil works, which is really the Corps of Engineers, exclusively, and one for acquisition and technology, the weapon systems. There was actually four, but only one authorized by Congress. Mine was a little bit different than the others.

DePue: Normally the rule of thumb is, the longer the title, the less important you are. But you had a very important position in the Department of the Army.

Lamont: I thought so, anyway (both laugh).

DePue: Why has it been such a long time since you and I last spoke?

Lamont: I had a trip to Havana, Cuba for four days, which interrupted our interview schedules. So, between your schedule and mine, it's taken us a while to get back together.

DePue: Why, Mr. Secretary, did you head down to Havana?

Lamont: I had been to Havana, Cuba **legally** in 1999 for reasons we won't discuss, and my wife was always intrigued by some of my stories. For our forty-fifth wedding anniversary, after Obama had opened individual travel to Cuba, I promised a trip to Cuba. Before we were able to get it done, President Trump came into office and reversed some of the freedom of travel. So we couldn't go. We later determined that, if you went on some kind of an educational purposed trip, tour-trip, you could get into Cuba. We determined that we could do that and did it and enjoyed ourselves very much.

DePue: Speaking of your wife and speaking of travel, I'm going to start off with this. Did your wife move with you out to D.C.?

Lamont: No. She initially was there almost full-time for about two to three months, while we got settled in. I initially was in an apartment while we looked for more permanent housing. It was early 2009; we were in the recession, the housing crisis such that the rentals did not go down (laughs) in D.C., but housing prices seemed to drop a little bit. It's very expensive to live in the D.C. area.

We found a condo we preferred then over apartment living. It was in Alexandria, Virginia, so with her help, we bought the condo, and she stayed and we furnished it and did all the things you have to do to set it up. After two or three months, as my schedule started putting me on the road—she was very much involved in a number of projects back here—she happens to be the chair of the Memorial Hospital Foundation and things of that nature. She does a lot of volunteer work for St. Aloysius Catholic Grade School, as their librarian, as their volunteer librarian, and things like that. So, if I wasn't around, she said, "Why am I sitting here?"

She returned to Springfield and then would come out once or twice a month for three or four days at a time, typically long weekends or whenever there was a special event that we thought she'd enjoy. Once a year—at least once a year—I tried to put her on one of my trips because you learn very quickly that, in the military, spouses of military leadership are important. The old maxim is, you recruit the soldier, but you retain the family. So finding out what's important to the families, so the soldier will be retained, is crucial. Wives are often the way that's determined.

There are specific courses, I know, for a general's wife to take when her husband or his wife becomes a general, and that's how to deal with the spouses of their military members. We learn right away that health care,

education of the kids, and family housing are the three critical components. Oftentimes you won't hear that from the soldier, but when the wives get together or the spouses get together, separately from us, you start hearing the rest of the story, about what deployments are doing to the families and what health care is not provided here in a certain location. That was important to me.

If ever there was an issue… Because we had a lot of family readiness that was involved in my position, I'd like her to go because she always did separate meetings with spouses, and you learned a lot more. She would have done it more, but it was such that the Army…the question of whether or not she could fly on military flight. It became so difficult for spouses to fly. A number of generals got in trouble because, where they thought wives were authorized to travel with them, [that] ended up not being the case. It almost got to the point where it wasn't worth it to even make that effort. So, after the first year or two, any trips she went on, I paid it; we purchased a private ticket for her. She did not fly on a military aircraft.

DePue: You mentioned the things that were important for retention, especially from the family standpoint. Almost all of that fell under your rubric, didn't it?

Lamont: Well, yes (both laugh). As you said, my position was assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs. So any issue that dealt with people, manpower, —and that's both with uniform soldier, as well as the civilian employee, which we had over 300,000 when I first got there, civilian employees—anything that affected them, whether it's benefits, whether it's the retirement, whether it's their education, any effect on their families, somewhere it was under (both laugh) my general responsibility.

DePue: We're going to get to some of those as we get a little bit farther into today. But since we're in the neighborhood of travel, how much travel did you have?

Lamont: A lot. I was advised early on that, in my position, I needed to see the people; I need to be operational; I need to be in the field. I didn't travel by myself. I had a staff of, typically, at least three would travel with me. They turned out to be your scheduler… They're all military.

My executive officer would travel; my sergeant major would travel. He would spin off at any meeting we were at, and he would go meet with the enlisted personnel and the non-commissioned officers to find out what's going on. In other words, these are listening sessions. I would listen and hear from the senior officers and commanders at an installation, whereas the other folks would hear from the enlisted and people of that ilk, as well as civilians. We'd typically meet with the top one or two civilian leaders, who are called SESs [Senior Executive Services].

You've heard on the salary scales, a GS-15. Well, there's s step beyond that for civilian employees, called the senior executive service. They're the highest paid civilians in federal government. They carry, as I did, a military rank, as well, for protocol purposes. There's typically a GS-15 or one or two SES individuals at every Army installation. We would meet with them too, to find out, from the civilian standpoint, their own perspective, what was going on there, what was troubling, what was missing, what they needed or not. Every now and then we hear good things (both laugh). It wasn't just a gripe or a complaint session.

DePue: Were you a SES?

Lamont: No. Under the federal schedules, I was considered an executive four. I wish I was an SES, because they got paid more than I did! (DePue laughs) Those who are subject to presidential appointments and Senate confirmation, our salaries are set by the Congress. We're not on a salary schedule, as in general services, like the GS-15s of the world or the SESs. There's an SES-1, an SES-2, SES-3, and there are individual steps within those classifications. Not with us (both laugh). To my chagrin, I had a number of SESs that earned more than I did, and I was not happy about some of that, given they got locality pay and things like that. I got none of that. But hey, I was aware of that going into it. So hey, you take what you get.

DePue: How candid did you find people and the sergeant major too? Would the soldiers talk candidly with him? Were you hearing what they really thought?

Lamont: They would probably talk more candidly to him than some of the senior officers would talk to me. Oftentimes the commanding general would be pretty open with me. But people underneath him might not be quite as free. They might have been a little bit more reluctant to be as blunt as they might have been elsewhere.

Oftentimes we tried to catch them in either a personal setting, like we'd always end up at dinners at night. You don't go to one of these installations, where they don't have you programmed dawn to dusk, typically with a dinner that night. In the more casual settings, we often would find the tongues loosened a bit, and we might hear a few more stories that weren't scripted, while you set around the table.

Also, I'll tell you… Another thing we did where we learned a lot was I and my staff, we always worked out everyplace we went. That meant, typically for us, 5:30 or 6:00 in the morning, going to whatever the gyms were, the workout stations on those posts, where nobody knew who you were half the time, because I was not accompanied by other than my staff. We all look alike in our t-shirts and shorts, and the locker room that… We were able to open a few doors sometimes in the locker rooms and may hear a little bit more.

Also, we'd always pick up the post's little newsletter or newspaper, You'd be surprised at some of the things you would hear in there. [You'd] go, "Oh, we weren't aware of this." There's a problem with your elementary school on post or something like that, or that there hasn't been an obstetrician at the post hospital in six months, and the expectant mothers need to travel forty miles for health care. We'd learn things like that, which sometimes your commanders would be a little reluctant to tell you, or that wasn't something that was tops on their mind in their priority of what their needs were.

DePue: Do you remember anything that really struck you or surprised you, in going out on these trips?

Lamont: Not really. If anything, I was surprised at how good moral was, almost uniformly wherever we went. We would always put our finger to the wind. Are people happy at this post? It was by degrees sometimes, but we thought, As a general rule of thumb, the professional soldiers are pretty happy with their lot.

DePue: I thought soldiers were always supposed to gripe.

Lamont: Well, they gripe about (both laugh) certain things, but on the whole, they enjoy what they were doing.

DePue: They were proud to serve?

Lamont: They were very proud to serve. That came across pretty clearly. There were times, by the way, when we go up, particularly when we went over to deployments in Iraq or Afghanistan, we set up tables for lunches, with only enlisted personnel. I'd do both, but I'd always have one table where I'd have a meeting by myself, with one or two of my staff, simply all enlisted personnel. These would be Private Snuffy, who's eighteen years old. You'd hear all kinds of stories.

You'd hear things like… Talking to a young lady from Kentucky. She was maybe twenty-five, twenty-six, and she was National Guard. She just deployed. She said, "I've been deployed before." I said, "Really? What deployment is this?" She said, "This is my fourth deployment." "Oh, you're kidding me. This is horrible!" She said, "No, I volunteered for every one." "Are you married?" "Yes, I'm married." " Do you have children?" "Yes, I have children," she said, "but I needed a job, so I volunteered every time." She said, "I don't belong to this State National Guard. I'm from Kentucky, but I'm with a unit from Georgia, and I've been with a unit from Indiana," she said. I've found that reasonably common.

The other thing I found—you'll love this—was sometimes in meeting with spouses, a spouse would—a wife typically—would be concerned about the number of deployments of their husband-soldier. Oftentimes these were National Guard soldiers. She'd say, "He's on his third deployment." This

doesn't sound right. They're not supposed to be rotating that quickly. So, we take this back. We always took notes, wherever we were, and we'd go back and check out what the situation was. We'd find that the soldier had volunteered to go and didn't tell his wife. This was quite common. They wanted to stay with their unit, or they had other reasons to go, but they couldn't bring themselves to tell their spouses.

DePue: I had the mental image of these meetings with all the enlisted men and women and all the officers, outside there, sweating bullets, afraid of what they might be saying (DePue laughs) in that meeting.

Lamont: You learned a lot. You'd find that the eighteen, nineteen, twenty-year-old's, once they got over their shyness and since I wasn't wearing a uniform—if I'd been wearing a uniform and it looked like I had a couple of stars on my shoulders, they might have been a little more reluctant—after a while, they were very open with me, much more open (laughs) in many respects than your senior military leadership.

DePue: What's the most memorable trip you took?

Lamont: Well, there were more than one. As I said, I had the opportunity to be in Iraq a couple of times and flying in a helicopter over the desert and visiting some of our outposts in the middle of nowhere and [looking] at some of the conditions our people were living in. You hear some of the stories. [It was] the same way in Afghanistan, seeing how these people live but yet their morale, typically, was still quite high. You start believing in that adage, that this is all about something bigger than yourself, which is a very common phrase within the Army.

The Army's about something bigger than yourself, and by gosh, you start believing that. That this is true. Where do we find young men and women volunteering to do what they do and put themselves, not only in harm's way, but living in a tent, living under some very severe conditions. Boy, it really puffs your chest up a little bit. You come back with a great sense of pride in what these folks do. Even the most cynical among us would come back the same way. But Afghanistan was interesting. I thought that it was a miserable place.

Second to that, I was in Serbia, Kosovo. I thought that was a miserable place. That's the one place that I didn't think we treated our soldiers the way they deserved. I raised questions about it because they're in a relatively small area—I can't remember the name of the camp, but it's Camp Freedom or something—it's all surrounded by barbed wire. It's a very poor looking area. Even though there's no combat going on there—we are "a peace keeping force" —we don't let our troops go outside the wire. They're kept right there for at least nine months to a year.

There's minimal recreational activities for them because these aren't major posts. They're a post that's been put up in the last ten years, so there's not like movie theaters and restaurants and things like that, nor is alcohol allowed to be served, which we all wonder, Well, it's a Muslim country, or we might offend somebody. I said, "This is nuts! We're there, helping them out. We're inside our area. The French are two miles in one direction. They have a club serving alcohol. I don't hear the folks from this country complaining about them." "The Germans and the Brits all have their private clubs, but we can't let our twenty-one-year-old soldiers, mature soldiers, have a beer on occasion?"

I had a commander come to me once, and he said, "You know how bad it is? I asked senior leadership, on July 4th, to allow to have two beers in a controlled area, two beers per soldier. And I was turned down." And I thought, How stupid! I couldn't understand it. Soon as I got back, I fired off a letter. Actually, [I] called the commander of the U.S. Army Europe, thinking he was in charge. He says, "No, I absolutely agree with you." He said, "But I don't have oversight on General Order Number 1," which is no alcohol on these posts. I said, "Who does?" He says, "U.S. Forces, Europe," which at that time was being led by a naval admiral. It's not Army. It's whoever's in that position in U.S. Forces Europe, not U.S. Army Europe.

U.S. Forces Europe has the general standing orders for that kind of a situation. That general order, though, had been in effect for over ten years, and [there] had been several different commanders in that position, but it never changed. Same way in Iraq and Afghanistan. I thought, We can do better than this. This doesn't make common sense. I don't care what the religious overtones were, if it could be in a controlled environment, I thought we could be a little bit freer with our soldiers.

DePue: It sounds like you weren't successful in changing that policy?

Lamont: I was not. I went to the secretary of the Army. He absolutely agreed with me. But to get to the U.S. Forces Europe, you're going to have to go through the Department of Defense, the secretary of Defense's office. He and I were both reluctant; we didn't think it would do any good at all.

DePue: Maybe they could have relied on the outcome of the Army-Navy game that year or something?

Lamont: What happens is, young kids find a way, places, of obtaining alcohol. Then they get into trouble, and then it's a career ending issue, no different than an eighteen or nineteen-year-old in the States, trying to buy beer somewhere. You'll see that with twenty-year-old's and twenty-five-year-old's and people of age doing something like that in these places, and it causes problems where it need not be.

DePue: One other question, when you went overseas, especially in Afghanistan, but I guess the same question could be applied to Iraq, did the soldiers think we were winning?

Lamont: I saw considerable difference in what was going on in Iraq. Of course, we're on the back end of Iraq. My first visit to Iraq was in either late 2009 or 2010, so we were not in significant combat. We were in combat, but clearly, we were doing well there.

Afghanistan, there's just a whole different—I hate to use the term—flavor for what was going on there. I think, from the senior officers on down, most soldiers knew the history of foreign occupation in Afghanistan and how it never worked out. Everyone was well aware of the Russians from twenty years before and that it was tribal and that there's… Who could you rely upon, who, arguably, were our friends and allies, from the Afghanistan government to the provinces?

I think there was much more a feeling that what we were trying to accomplish, to the extent you could truly define what our end game was and our goal and objective was, which I guess was a democratic government, able to stay on its own and defend itself in Afghanistan. I think there was general feeling that this is a struggle that we may never win. In fact, I kept thinking, Is this any different than Vietnam? If we don't have the hearts and the minds of the people and their support, I'm not sure we're ever going to change things here.

John Newman (center without hat) and Tom Lamont (to Newman's right) with their personal security detail during a visit to Kandahar, Afghanistan in April 2011. Newman served as the deputy assistant secretary of the Army for Training and Operations.

As I said, in Afghanistan, the provinces, there is no ruling government, frankly, of Afghanistan that we could tell, that extended beyond relatively small distances past Kabul and Kandahar. It was tribal; it was chieftains.

DePue: And yet, I believe you said that morale was good, which would tend to make think that they believed in what they were doing, that they were there for the right reasons.

Lamont: I think, for the most part, that's certainly very true, even in Afghanistan. There was always, I think, something in the back of their minds that [wondered], Can we keep it going? And, I think the same thing was felt by the Afghanistans. How long are we prepared to stay there? I think there was some reluctance on some of the Afghanistan leaders, particularly on the tribal side, to fully engage, one way or another, with us, with the belief that at some point in time, we won't be here to help protect them. And they'll be on their own. So, they might be playing it both ways.

DePue: Change of subject here. I'm going to get into a subject which I don't think you had any real direct involvement with, at all. But I do believe that I've picked up that you have an opinion about it. That's September 11, 2012, the Benghazi incident where, as you know, Christopher Reeve, who was the ambassador for Algeria, and three others were killed. I'm trying to make sure I've the country right; it's Algeria.

Lamont: I'm not sure it's Algeria.

DePue: Libya.

Lamont: Libya.

DePue: According to Leon Panetta's book, he had the attack starting at 3:42. He was notified fifty minutes later, and then he was briefed, I don't know, about an hour after that. But he says in here that, "There were no aircraft, no aircraft carrier…" And this is a direct quote from his book. "No aircraft, no aircraft carrier, no service ship would have gotten there any faster than a group that arrived there at 7:30, that flew in from Tripoli." So this is Libya. "And at 11:15 pm—this is all Eastern Standard time—the facility in Benghazi once again came under attack, and it was there that two CIA officers died." Then he finishes up by saying, "The simply, sad fact of Benghazi is that we did not have intelligence that such an attack might occur, and as a result, did not have forces close enough when the violence struck to be able to save our people from harm." The reason I'm asking you this is because the Pentagon, to a certain extent, is a small town, even though it's a huge place. And I'm sure everybody was talking about this.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: And what were you hearing? What were you being told about what had happened?

Lamont: Well, we didn't… I personally did not know much more than what we were hearing and reading about, ourselves, at that time. Over time, as people started coming back and forth, and you started hearing more of maybe some of the actual facts, your thoughts and what you learned and what may have happened from what originally was reported, started to change a bit.

I think Panetta was absolutely right, that we didn't have available forces, including aircraft, at the time of the Benghazi incident. However, I will suggest, what I've heard is, where he may have been incorrect, that we **were** aware of security concerns. I will go so far to say that the overriding Army commander, who is a four-star for the area that would include that area, which is AFRICOM, under the African command, told me personally, and he testified at least twice in a classified setting to the House hearings, that he had personally contacted the ambassador, who was later killed, that he had contacted the ambassador about the concerns, and the ambassador advised him that he felt they could keep it under control. But this gentleman said, "I offered them more troops, on multiple occasions, and the ambassador turned me down, with the belief that they would be able to control the situation. Unfortunately, that turned out not to be the case.

DePue: Next question, back in your lane now, budget issues for most of the time you're there were a big concern…

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: Anytime you talk about something as expensive as the military, maintaining it is always going to be a concern. But I believe there were cuts in the military budget, both in fiscal 2011 and 2012, and then there was the discussion about sequester, which hit, I believe, actually it took affect about the time you left?

Lamont: Unfortunately not.

DePue: Before you were there?

Lamont: It took affect before I left. It grew out of the Budget Control Act of 2011, which really was taking place for the calendar year of 2012, but it came into effect with about four or five months left in our fiscal year, at the end of 2011. All of a sudden, we are told our budget has been frozen, at least by, in my case, $1 billion. I had to figure out how I could save $1 billion, but I only had five months, four to five months, left in the fiscal year.

You have obligated contracts. How do you do this? It was going to be tough. A lot of people don't understand, but the Army is made up of soldiers, and that's your big expense, not giant weapons' platforms. We would always look to the Navy and the Air Force. When they're told to save $1 billion, they

stop production of four or five planes, or you slow down the production of a ship, ship building. I can't do that. Fifty-four percent of the Army's budget is people, 54 percent.

DePue: Of uniform people?

Lamont: All people, personnel. My budget was 54 percent of the Army's budget. The rest of the Army's budget is small pieces of the pie for installation management, weapon's acquisitions, retirement, health care, things of that nature. Nothing else is really bigger than 12, 13, 14 percent. So, to save real money, it's people. We had to immediately start cutting people.

We started cutting our contractors, typically, and in not extending military personnel, even to the extent that, if they were up for retention, if they weren't in the right MOS, in a job where they were particularly needed, and they were, say, mid-career, not the people at fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years, but they were eight, nine years, we might have a reduction in force. Let's put it that way.

We might say, "No, you can't reenlist." This was really bad for us to have to do that. What we tried to do, in those situations, was convince them to retrain to another MOS, where we actually needed more people in those jobs. And by MOS, of course, we mean Military Occupational Specialty.

DePue: I always thought it was Congress that set the force structure parameters for each one of the services. Did they change that? Was there a reduction in the force structure?

Lamont: No. My budget was always based upon a projected and proposed force structure and was budgeted for. But when they did the Budget Control Act and froze the DOD budget, which, of course, impacted all the services, it gave us no choice but to revise our numbers.[55]

So, the recruiting numbers went way down, at least initially. We were going through all kinds of steps to try to save that $1 billion. Actually it was a little bit more than $1 billion. We're in better shape, then, for the next fiscal year, for 2012, because we had some advance planning. So our contractual obligations were slowed down. Weapons acquisition, MILCON, military construction, all those things took deep cuts.

We closed training ranges, a lot of things that, unfortunately, really impacted our readiness, which if you read the papers in the last year or two, every chief of staff of the Army says their number one goal is to increase our

[55] The Budget Control Act of 2011, enacted August 2, 2011, is a federal statute enacted by the 112th United States Congress and signed into law by President Barack Obama in response to the 2011 debt-ceiling crisis. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budget_Control_Act_of_2011)

readiness.[56] You lose readiness in a hurry. I didn't realize quite the extent we'd lose it so quickly, but we do. We really do.

DePue: The readiness has several components. You've got the personnel side; you've got the maintenance of equipment side; you've got the training side as well. Were you suffering on all three of those, do you think?

Lamont: Yes. Absolutely. We were suffering all the way, and we were doing things we knew, in a long-term situation, were hurting the Army. We had no choice. We were making decisions that were the least, in our opinions, the least troubling. They were all bad decisions, but we tried to make the least bad decision. We have something called bottoming out, bathtub type of effect. where we saw… After Vietnam, where there would be… Just picture the shape of a bathtub, and personnel being high. All of a sudden, you drain the bath tub, and your personnel and size of your active duty component goes way down. Then, sure enough, something comes up, another five, six years later. In this case it was the early Desert Storm. You've got to build it right back up.

We always argued we should have sort of a rather leveling of military in strength and not the ups and downs, ups and downs, ups and downs, the hills, the valleys of force projection. It just drove us all crazy.

DePue: What do you say to the critics of how much money the United States spends on the military, those who point to all the other countries and add up all these other countries' are spending on defense, since we overwhelm everybody, by far?

Lamont: It was well known and certainly repeatedly mentioned by both secretary of defenses that I served under, actually there were three. But Gates and Panetta, primarily, [mentioned] that we spend more on our defense than the next nine or ten countries together spend on their defense. The question then comes to us, what is our insurance worth? Your defense is an insurance. You only like it when you need it, but you hate not to have it. If you don't have insurance when you have the fire, you've got a problem. So, the argument always is, you better have it there.

Now, could expenses be controlled a better way? Probably. Are we extended in our force projections around the world, extended perhaps too much? There's certainly an argument to be made. We're still an occupying force in Germany. The war was over in 1945. We still have about 36,000 troops there. The Korean War was over in 1953; we still have at least 30,000

[56] At the narrowest level, readiness is the training and health of a unit and the maintenance status of its equipment. At its most expansive, readiness is "the ability of military forces to fight and meet the demands of assigned missions." (https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/industry-4-0/reframing-defense-military-readiness.html)

troops there. How many troops do we still have in—and will for a long time, my guess—in Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan?

This is true a story. We have, on the Army alone, we have soldiers in a 153 countries, at last report that I saw. They may not be 1,000 troops; they may be at a platoon level or engineers in some place in Africa, building a well, a water supply or a schoolhouse, as we try to change the hearts and minds as part of our civic engagement and humanitarian operations. They may not be wearing uniforms, but they're there because we have strategic reasons for doing that. Yes, do our allies and other countries seem to take advantage of us? Yeah. Do our defense industrial efforts take advantage of us? Of course they do.

I will tell you one story. I think in 2013 budget, we asked for x type of equipment, x type of manpower, and the last thing we needed was more tanks. We have over 300, at that time, over 300 tanks, all lined up in fields in Kuwait. We never brought them back from Iraq. Of course, they were there as kind of as a signal to Iran, because they're forward projected equipment. But it was cheaper to leave them in the desert, where they don't deteriorate nearly as much as they might, as it would the cost to bring them back. How many ships does it take to bring back 300 tanks, 500 to 1,000 Humvees and trucks? You fly over in a helicopter; we have acres of these sitting out there. And we haven't fired a tank round since like 2007. We have very few tanks in Afghanistan, because the geography doesn't provide for it.

So what does Congress do? Gives us… It budgets $500 million to provide us with another 400 and some tanks. Why, because tanks are made in the U.S., and a lot of people have constituents who work in factories that build tanks or provide tank supplies. So, [I] wouldn't always blame this on the military. It's the last thing we wanted. What are we going to do with them? They're going to sit somewhere.

When we wanted that money, actually for better R&D, better modernization of a lot of our equipment, instead of buying some of the old stuff. You'll hear constantly, should we go through another BRAC, Base Reallocation, closing some bases? Well, to try to do that in a state where they employ 10,000 or 15,000 people, and you have 20,000 soldiers or 10,000 soldiers, many of whom are living off post; they're buying pizzas; they're buying Harley Davidsons [motorcycles]; they're buying cars; they're living in apartments. The economic factors they bring to those communities is unbelievable. So to tell one state, "We're going to close Fort Campbell. We're going to close—"

DePue: For Illinois, it was Rantoul, the Air Force base at Rantoul. It was Fort Sheridan, up in the Chicago area.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: Not during your tenure but before.

Lamont: Oh, no, before. I was in the Guard when that happened because we used to get our uniforms up there (both laugh). That was our closest uniform post for the Guardsmen. Those are very tough decisions, but the amount of square footage that we have, that is unused, is extreme. It's in the millions of square feet, which… I heard this being discussed from the assistant secretary for installation. He said, "It costs us at least $3 a square foot, per year to maintain those unused buildings. We've got to get rid of them. We've got to consolidate these bases, but the Congress just cannot bring themselves to do it, particularly after the last BRAC. Some of the projected savings did not come true.

The argument was, we initially have to spend a lot of money. If we're going to consolidate these bases, then all of a sudden, we have to do some things in the bases that are going to remain that may require new housing, may require new medical facilities, the hospitals are very expensive. We agreed to build at least three new hospitals in the U.S. alone, at bases. The savings was supposed to be long-term.

Well, ten years after that BRAC started, there was minimal savings, and the Congress finally realized they pretty much had been duped, or they had duped themselves. A lot of fingers got pointed at Defense, but I would argue it wasn't Defense that made some of those decisions on the expenditures that took place in certain locations.

You look at… Let's see, there's a senator named Mitch McConnell, (DePue laughs) who happens to be the president of the Senate. Look at the posts he has, both Fort Knox [Kentucky], Fort Campbell [Kentucky]. Fort Knox only has one brigade left of people. It used to be the home of the Armor.[57] That was moved to Fort Hood [Texas] some ten years ago. So there's not much there, but trust me, it is not going to be closed, while he's there. The examples beyond that are numerous.

DePue: Let's change the subject to something else that is difficult to save money on, and that's the pension system. I believe, during the time you were there, there was a beginning of a discussion about some significant pension reform.

Lamont: Yes, which, by the way, has gone into effect this year, right now. We were looking at two major drivers of the Army budget—not just the Army; I will say Defense as well—that were growing leaps and bounds. That is health care,

[57] Equipped with tanks and supported by infantry, artillery, helicopters, and air forces, armor units close with and destroy enemy forces using maneuver, protected firepower, and shock. (https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/army-combat-branches-armor)

the cost of health care to both our soldiers and our retirees, our veterans. Where was I going with this?

DePue: I would imagine just pensions themselves.

Lamont: And our pensions, and our retirement. I represented the Army on a Defense Committee, as there were my counterparts from all the other services, as the office of secretary of defense brought to us, proposals of what we should be looking at, in terms of changing retirement policies for the military, active duty. Civilians, of course, are under the regular federal retirement schedules, like any other federal employee. But the Army, as you know, it's twenty years to get a pension. If you retire before that, you get nothing. But if you joined at eighteen, you could start drawing a pension at thirty-eight.

When we went to a professional Army, we had more and more staying the full twenty years. It was a profession to them. I think right now, it's still roughly 30 percent. I may be wrong; it's still not a huge amount, but much more than what it used to be.

Lamont only rarely visited the White House during his tenure at the Pentagon. He was attending a business meeting on how to achieve efficiencies in government with several other agency representatives in 2011.

DePue: Thirty percent that get to the twenty years?

Lamont: Twenty years, who fully retire, what we would refer to as fully retired. By the way, our meetings included the sergeant majors of every service, sergeant major of the Army, the top enlisted person in the Army, the top enlisted person in the Navy and Marines and Air Force and Coast Guard. They were not shrinking violets. (both laugh) They spoke up very strongly in these meetings.

I saw one in which the general counsel of the Department of Defense put it on the table. J. Johnson, who then later became the secretary of homeland security, I saw a sergeant major put him in the corner with some questions, rather a little more blunt than he'd been spoken to in a long time (both laugh), which I found refreshing.

But, of course, the proposals included, do we flip to a pure civilian type schedule, where you would vest, I think, in the federal government; you would vest in five years, to some extent. You wouldn't get much of a pension, but obviously, if you go twenty, you'd get a lot more, your full retirement. We had concerns about that because it is critical of us to be able to assess when we're going to lose our mid-level officers, our mid-career officers. Our study showed that it was between years eight, ten, eleven, twelve, in that range.

If a person came into the Army, an officer in particular, he's gone through ROTC or whatever schooling he had to become an officer, we're going to say he's twenty-one. Ten years later he's thirty-one. He's probably a senior captain now and often married and has his first child or perhaps two children by then. He's already moved two or three times, and the family, then, all of a sudden becomes a part of his professional career planning. Am I going to stick it out for another ten years, or is it time for me to go? It's tough.

Any number of them decide, I've got ten years in. And then we try to dangle some incentives to certain levels of captain. It was like, pick anyplace you want to go to get a masters' degree. Anyplace you can get in to get advanced education, the Army will pay for. Or pick an installation you want to go to. You want to go to Pacific command Fort Shafter in Hawaii, by gosh we're going to send you.

We would give them choices to incentivize them to stay, not everybody, but the senior captains that are rated at a certain level. We want them to be career. We have an investment in them, a significant educational and monetary investment. We want to keep their experience, so we work very hard to do that.

Fortunately, we have had good luck in being able to keep many of them, not all of them, but we keep quite a few. Our concern was, if we went to a schedule where they could quit and get something and leave after ten years and still take a portion of a pension with them, that the incentive for them to go into the private sector would be much greater and that we would lose a significant number of our experienced senior captains.

DePue: How about on the enlisted side, as well? You're losing those senior NCOs [Non-Commissioned Officers], as well.

Lamont: Oh yeah, absolutely. I hate to relate it just to officers, but we probably had more concerns with them, but equally concerned with the NCOs. There were no studies, and we asked Rand; we asked all kinds of folks that we had contracts with, research companies outside the Army, to review this for us, before decisions could be made. What does this mean to our recruiting and our retention, if we were to adopt a different type of retirement system?

That was going full bore when I left, and as I say, they have adopted such a modification. It went into effect this year. Actually, you get a choice; you can go either way.

DePue: This is something I got from an article in the *Military Times*, "Under the changes, it will be replaced with a blended pension and investment system, featuring automatic contributions to troops, thrift saving plans, and an opportunity for government matches to personal contributions."

Lamont: Right, thrift savings plan, a TSP, is no different than federal civilians, same way. It was really, as you say, a blend of the regular civil service system, within federal government. But I think you also have the option, particularly if you're in now… If you not a new soldier coming in; if you're a current soldier, you can opt to go either way for the remainder of your career.

DePue: At the time that you'll reach some time in service or at the beginning of your service?

Lamont: No, I'm saying, if you joined four or five years ago, and this law's taking effect this year, you have the option of determining whether to stay in the original retirement system, do your twenty years and go, or move over to like the federal civil service system. There is a blend; actually, I think you can do that. But if you're… I don't know how it is if you're a new soldier, just coming in; I don't know if you have those options or not.

DePue: What was your opinion about the potential changes, when you're in these discussions?

Lamont: Being the manpower guy and the person who oversaw recruiting and retention, a lot of that fell (both laugh) under my responsibility, and I was nervous about it. As I say, hey, don't make these changes until we have some idea of what the impact is going to be in our senior leaders, both the NCOs and our officer corps. I'm not sure we know even yet. I think we have projections, but I'm not sure how this is going to play out.

What typically happens when recruiting goes low or whatever, you starting throwing money incentives to it. If we can't get people to join the Army on a regular basis now, we start saying, "Join now, and you get a $10,000 bonus or $15,000 bonus." We start throwing bonus recruiting incentives at them. We'll finally get to a point where people will do it. But it costs money.

DePue: Let's stay in another area that you had your hands in, that being issues like base housing. You've already kind of alluded to that anyway.

Lamont: Yes, well and—

DePue: And medical facilities.

Lamont: Yes, medical command was direct report to me. So we were very much involved with that. I spend quite a bit of time, particularly when I was traveling, to visit field hospitals. I visited our major hospital, right off the combat zone, [it's] in Germany, which, by the way, we're building a brand new one, finally. This one goes back to the late forties and fifties, and it's **very** busy. But Walter Reed… While I was there, we worked very hard to build a new Walter Reed because of some of the issues over in Bethesda—

DePue: And we did talk about that last time.

Lamont: Yes, we did. But you learned a lot. You learned… You visit some of our posts. We have two major posts in Alaska; Fort Richardson is one. You find that soldiers with families, some of whom have certain health issues, they don't have facilities or medical personnel to treat them, particularly children with certain special needs. Many soldiers, if they have that issue within their family, they fight very hard to avoid any assignment there.

Soldiers aren't stupid. Families look to see where a new assignment is coming. If, in fact, they have certain special needs to be attended to, they will make some decisions then to try to either avoid that assignment or maybe move on.

Of all things, my first visit to Hawaii, PACOM, Pacific Command, [I was] thinking everybody must want to here; what a beautiful place. And then the first group of senior officers I met with, were all—that may be a little bit of an exaggeration—they collectively were concerned about the quality of education in Hawaii. For one thing, there are minimal housing facilities on post in Hawaii. So, most soldiers live off post, and their children will attend a regular school, a public education in Hawaii.

The problem was, when I was there, Hawaii was going through some very serious budget times, particularly with their schools. They were regularly scheduled for only four-and-a-half days a week. For the first six months of the year I was there, they were only scheduled for four days. Wednesday afternoon and Friday afternoons, there was no school. It was a terrible situation.

Any number of soldiers say, "Really, we're concerned," particularly your senior officers. I say that because they're older; their kids are older kids; they may be high school age, and they didn't think they were being properly prepared for.

There's only a very small, base DOD school, and only those who lived on post could attend a DOD school. I had one colonel, in fact—he's a senior guy in a place like Fort Shafter [Hawaii]—he said, "I have four children. I send all four to a private school, to private schools." He said, "It costs me over

$30,000 a year to send my children to private schools." He said, "Fortunately my wife and I are able to do that, but we have no money for anything else."

I heard that story; I thought, Oh, my gosh, this is terrible. But I heard that story [from] any number of other soldiers there. You'd think, Oh, everybody wants to go to Hawaii. He said, "No, we have trouble getting people to come here. They fight like crazy to avoid it, if they have families." Now the situation has changed somewhat there, but you'd be surprised; every post is different. Everything is unique and you never know what's going to be the driving issue there.

DePue: Was part of the solution for Hawaii to have more on-base housing?

Lamont: No, there wasn't room for it. It's very restricted; it's an island; it's very restricted (both laugh) where you can go there. You'll find, in a lot of military assignments, those kind of concerns. If they're going to move around, they've learned that, as much as they may not want to live post housing, because oftentimes post housing seemed to be inferior... We've done a great job over the last ten or fifteen years of rebuilding post housing to make them livable.

The reason you like that, if you have children, is because all the DOD schools teach a curriculum, the same curriculum at the same time schedule, where it may not be the same [in other schools]. If you're in a public school in Lexington, Kentucky, and then you move to Fort Hood, Texas, the Texas school system may be entirely different, or Germany or Korea or one thing or another. You never know at what stage your children are going to go into, particularly in the high school level.

DePue: How about PXs and commissaries; are there any headaches involved with that? I assume that's also part of what you dealt with.

Lamont: It was. I was (both laugh) on that Defense Board too. That was interesting, and again, we had commissaries and PXs that are supposed to make their own way, financially. They're not supposed to lose money; let's put it that way.

DePue: I didn't think about this, but officer and NCO clubs, does that fit into the same box, or is that separate?

Lamont: I don't recall having anything to do with those, quite frankly.

DePue: So, commissaries and PXs.

Lamont: Commissaries and PXs, PXs being different from commissaries. Commissaries, by law at the time, could not charge more than 5 percent higher than their own food costs. So food was typically much cheaper. Today, I still shop… My wife and I still go to the commissary down at Scott Air Force Base [Illinois], because I, being retired military as a colonel and twenty-six years in, I'm entitled to commissary privileges. So, three or four times a

year, (DePue laughs) we still go to Scott Air Force Base, although the numbers have changed, particularly in areas where there are a huge number of veterans. Everybody comes in and shops at the commissary because you save so much money.

Again, DOD was trying to figure out, how can we stop this total drain on our defense budgets, going to non-readiness type of concerns? You don't win wars by having a cheap commissary. We were always looking to find ways to stop the blood flow. So they now have added, as you check out the door, they've added an additional 5 percent, I believe.

DePue: Don't you have the same dilemma when you're talking about medical facilities in some of these posts in big urban areas, where you've got big retired populations?

Lamont: Absolutely. And every year, the secretary of defense… We always concur, in that we would increase the copay.[58] The copay had not been increased since like 1980 or something. It was like $10 or whatever, something of that ilk. But the veterans service organizations, the American Legion, the VFW, they would just go up in arms. If we would say, "Add a dollar," they would go crazy and run straight to the Congress, and Congress never had the backbone to tell them no. So we would be blocked the whole time.

As I say, one of the very major problems that's still looming is the rapidly increasing health care costs of veterans. Also remember, we're in like our fourteenth year right now of war. We have a very aging population of Vietnam War veterans, so we have many veterans who have reached the time in life where health care has become more and more necessary. So there's significant pressure on our VA [Veterans Administration] facilities and the health care in general. It's expensive; it's very expensive.

DePue: But I would believe that the VA facilities was not part of your area of responsibility.

Lamont: No, it was not.

DePue: You probably breathed a sigh of relief, not to have to figure that one out.

Lamont: But understand, the Army has our own hospitals. way too many hospitals. And they're very expensive and manned by a lot of civilians, civilian personnel.

DePue: I think when we first met, you did mention the next one, correction facilities?

[58] A copayment or copay is a fixed amount for a covered service, paid by a patient or customer to the provider of the service before receiving the service. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copayment)

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: Was that an issue for you while you were in the job?

Lamont: Not a big issue, but it was an issue. And yes, I did have responsibility over Army correctional facilities, our major one being Fort Leavenworth [Kansas], which many people have heard about. But we get people in there, not just Army, because most services do not have long-term correctional facilities. There are some arrangements with federal government correctional facilities, federal prisons, with which we have agreements as well.

I visited Leavenworth. We have three different prisons there, at all different levels: maximum security, medium security, and lesser security. But, it takes money, as well. What some people don't realize is, the facility at Guantanamo, even though that's considered a Naval base, the correctional institution down there is run by the Army. That takes money and resources.

We do have, as I say, an arrangement with federal correction at certain levels. I think, typically, when we have a health care problem with some of our prisoners, we may not have the appropriate facilities to treat them at Fort Leavenworth. Then we arrange with federal government to move them over.

DePue: Of course, throughout the Obama administration, he kept saying he was going to close Guantanamo Bay.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: That obviously never happened. Did you have a personal opinion about that subject?

Lamont: It wasn't an overriding issue, but I saw it from two different perspectives, I think. Some of the concerns by the Congress was that we wanted to keep them under a military judicial system, versus moving them to a federal court system, if they were in the States. I'm not sure I agreed with the Congress on that. I thought we could handle it. [I] thought our military judicial system was capable, either way, of doing it. I didn't have a real opinion.

To me, my opinion is primarily based on what it was costing us in military manpower and money to maintain that prison facility down there, which at the time never exceeded more than 200 or 300 prisoners. It's very expensive. Now, I think we're down to under 100, and I see where they've asked for over $150 million in improvements, just for one year, in improvements, trying to send a message to Congress, get us out of here.

DePue: Then NIMBY [Not in My Backyard] comes into play. Who wants it in their district?

Lamont: Now, you might recall, in the State of Illinois, we had built a number of prisons some years ago, one of which did not open. It was located just north of Rock Island, where we have a military presence, it's Rock Island Arsenal. With the assistance of Senator Durbin, the federal government acquired that Illinois prison in 2012 or 2013, with the thought that it would be converted to, potentially, the place to move the prisoners from Guantanamo.

As soon as President Obama authorized that purchase, the Congress put an amendment on a budget bill, a bill that was going to pass no matter what, that no such monies could ever be expended for the transfer of any prisoners from Guantanamo. So, that stopped that.

DePue: I'm not sure the next subject is going to be a happier subject for you. You would think so, but I believe you also had some involvement or oversight for Arlington Cemetery.[59]

Lamont: I did. I did not have the operational side, but I had the policy side for Arlington. By that, I mean the decisions of burial, who would be buried there, if there were circumstances beyond what the Congress had called for—of course, we're running out of room there—any policy dealing with the burial, we were involved.

DePue: Did you have a couple of issues come up while you were there?

Lamont: Yes, two or three, only one of which required any real decision making. We had the family of Senator Ted Kennedy, who inquired as to… What do we call the horse drawn carriages?

DePue: The caissons?

Lamont: The caissons, the caisson for Senator Kennedy.[60] We had to explain to them that Senator Kennedy was entitled to be buried, by law, at Arlington. One, he had served in the military, and as a senator, he was also entitled to be placed there. But he was not entitled to a caisson. There are very strict limitations and requirements and conditions on who gets the horse drawn carriage. Actually, the family was very good, "Oh, we just didn't know. We knew that was the case with John Kennedy…" We're obviously so much aware of what had transpired with his death and the caisson. They readily accepted it. They did not seek to go to the president to have our decision overturned or anything like that.

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[59] Arlington National Cemetery is a United States military cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, outside Washington, D.C. On land seized by the U.S. government during the Civil War, the cemetery is on the former site of Robert E. Lee's beloved home, Arlington. (https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-arlington-national-cemetery-came-to-be-145147007/)

[60] A caisson is a two-wheeled cart designed to carry artillery ammunition. Caissons are also used to bear the casket of the deceased in some state and military funerals in certain Western cultures, including the United States. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limbers_and_caissons)

Another one came with a personal letter from, at that time, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Her chief negotiator in Afghanistan, who had been with her for many, many years—I can't recall his name, but he passed away suddenly, and he was a key diplomat. He passed away rather suddenly, and she wrote to the secretary of the army, requesting the family's wish that that gentleman be buried in Arlington.

While he'd been a diplomat and served honorably in several different postings, in particularly in Afghanistan for three or four years as her senior person, . he had not served in the military and was otherwise not entitled to burial; not everybody is entitled to be buried at Arlington, as you can imagine.

Of course, the secretary of the army says, "Lamont, this is you. You're in charge of this." (both laugh) I said, "She didn't sign the letter, Hilary, to me. She signed, Hilary, to you because she knew you, former Congressman McHugh, now Secretary of the Army McHugh. He said, "Hey, make the decision." He [the deceased diplomat] clearly did not meet the requirements. So it was denied. And the decision was accepted. There was no, to my knowledge, request to have it overturned. Only the president could overturn it.

The only time there was an exception, while I was there, was when we had some imbedded CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] individuals imbedded with the Army in Afghanistan, which the movie, I believe, *Zero Dark Thirty* was about this incident.[61] There two females involved, the chief CIA agent was a female. They were victims of a suicide bomber, one who was working with us, but apparently had been turned, and in a meeting with the senior CIA folks, as well as some military uniform personnel, had a suicide vest and blew himself up and killed seven, three of whom were CIA.

We had two families of the CIA individuals who requested their burial in Arlington. In these situations, it is common that we have a standing committee of five individuals, and they're all retired senior Army officers, that review requests. They make a recommendation to me. They recommended, since they were serving in a military capacity and died in a military situation, that they were entitled to be buried in Arlington. I absolutely agreed, and that's what happened.

In Panetta's book, he says he overturned it. No, he didn't overturn it. We never made any kind of decision that said they could not. I think what happened, he probably talked to a senior military advisor, who told him the rule, the standard rule, which was, they weren't entitled. But we had already made the decision to waive the rule.

[61] *Zero Dark Thirty* is a 2012 American thriller film directed by Kathryn Bigelow and written by Mark Boal. The film dramatizes the nearly decade-long international manhunt for Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden after the September 11 attacks. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zero_Dark_Thirty)

DePue: So they are buried there?

Lamont: They are buried there, two of the ones who requested it. We had requested Congress, years before, while I was there, to put in legislation. Every year we submit x-amount of legislation, through DOD, that we would like to see done, one of which was to add an amendment to the requirements for burial, an exception to rules kind of thing, for people just like those CIA [folks]. Congress never went along with it. Again, any exception is objected to rigorously by the veterans service organizations.

DePue: How long before it's full?

Lamont: Last I heard was, we have about fifteen to twenty years, max. But we've already got the land; we know where we're going.

DePue: Where's that?

Lamont: That's right across the street. There's a four-lane highway in between, but that's where it's going. So there's going to be lots of changes (both laugh) that have to be made.

DePue: But no longer Robert E. Lee's old land, huh?

Lamont: Oh well, it'll still be there, but it'll just be extended.

DePue: Yeah.

Lamont: But right now, there are other things in the way (both laugh).

DePue: A lot of people are familiar with it. I'm just wondering what your thoughts are when you mention the Old Guard and the job they do, the 3rd Regiment.[62]

Lamont: They do a tremendous job, oh yes. If you've ever been to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington and watched the changing of the guard and how impressive that it is, the people who do that and the people who serve in the funeral processions, in the caisson, are called the Old Guard. There's some very rigorous conditions for them to serve., and it is considered very much a privilege to serve in the Old Guard. They're the ones who conduct all those ceremonial issues there.

DePue: One of the issues that I know you were still around for when this came up is the question of women in combat or women's role in the military, period. Apparently in early 2012—this is always after studies were done and appeals with the various services—Secretary of Defense Panetta ordered 14,000

[62] The 3rd United States Infantry Regiment is a regiment of the United States Army. It currently has three active battalions and is readily identified by its nickname, The Old Guard, as well as Escort to the President. The regimental motto is *Noli Me Tangere* ("Touch Me Not"). The regiment is a major unit of the Military District of Washington (MDW). (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3rd_U.S._Infantry_Regiment_(The_Old_Guard))

positions, previously barred from women, to be removed. That was step number one.

I would assume, shortly after that, he looked at the possibility of opening up all combat positions to women. Let me just read what he said; this is a quote from his book, "I agreed with the chiefs and others who argued against making tests less rigorous, merely so that women would have an easier time passing them. What I could not understand was why we would bar a woman from serving, if she could pass them. Everyone deserved a chance to succeed."

I guess I've got two questions: one—you might not want to pursue this—what was your personal view of it? and two, talk me through the process, in terms of how the Army dealt with it.

Lamont: Those 14,000 he referenced came out of my shop, came from recommendations for changes to DODI, a DOD instruction, that specifically barred women from being assigned to a unit of combat or a unit that would be participating near a combat situation.

DePue: Which is different from going to the next step and serving in combat. Is that correct?

Lamont: Right. But the whole thing was to keep women away from a combat situation. It was being, not ignored, but it wasn't being followed. The circumstances didn't allow us, necessarily, to comply with the intent of that policy. So, while the Army could not "assign" somebody to an infantry unit or as I say, any type of unit within a potential combat situation, we would "attach" them. They're not assigned; they're attached. Yeah, they're still there, and they were serving and dying as anybody else.

DePue: Were they attached, serving as infantry or in support positions?

Lamont: They were attached as a support person. Let me give you the example of why. In Afghanistan, we learned early on that a male soldier could not enter the house of an Afghanistan family unless a male was in the house. It's the culture. This was considered; you never violate that. So, we needed women to have to lead some of the searches of the houses and buildings of which there no male members. Oftentimes they [the Army women] were engineers or civil affairs people, but that's a dangerous situation.

Our engineers would be attached to an infantry unit that were patrolling roads. In other words, they were after IEDs. We lost more than a few that way. The women in the Army were very upset that they couldn't go into positions that received the awards or could advance as rapidly in rank because the positions weren't there.

The major positions are in your combat operations, armor, artillery and infantry. And, if they couldn't be a part of those, they were in essence being discriminated against in terms of their ability to make rank or receive appropriate awards for their service.

DePue: A question about aviation as a branch. Obviously, there's a definite combat component of that, but I thought that women were serving as aviators for quite some time.

Lamont: They were, absolutely. I don't know what the distinction was on that. I couldn't tell you. It's very interesting, because I'm very much aware of Senator Tammy Duckworth and others who served in that capacity.[63] But it was the women who brought this to our attention and rigorously pushed to be allowed to serve in combat situations.

We drew up the proposal, which was modified I can't tell you how many times. We did it by MOS, initially medics. Women medics obviously are going to be in a combat situation, engineers and others. That amounted to those 14,000 positions. There was reluctance, even at certain senior levels within the Army.

Then there's great reluctance by some members of Congress, that we were sending daughters into a terrible situation, a combat situation. "We don't do that to our daughters." I'm telling you (laughs), I don't know how many West Point female graduates I talked to that were livid to think that somebody was telling them what they couldn't do. There are lots of stories. But I supported, personally, their request.

But it's more than just serving. We put all kinds of groups together to figure out how to do this the right way. We initially recommended that women could be placed at least battalion level artillery. But, if we're going to into company level, we couldn't just send a woman; it wouldn't be fair to them. We felt there had to be a woman support group. In other words if you're going to put women in a typically male dominated unit, you didn't put one or two. We believed you had to put four, five or six, so they would have their own support group and not be isolated.

It's not just easy to say, "Yeah we're going to let them all go to combat." It's how you do this. How do you integrate women into the forces so that we don't set them up to lose? We didn't want them to be isolated. Well, if there are two women and there are ninety-five males, how you think they are going to be treated?

[63] Ladda Tammy Duckworth (born March 12, 1968) is an American politician and former U.S. Army lieutenant colonel who has served as the junior United States Senator for Illinois since 2017. A member of the Democratic Party, she represented Illinois's 8th district in the United States House of Representatives from 2013 to 2017. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tammy_Duckworth)

DePue: How do you do that for something like a Special Forces A-Team—I think that's the terminology—or a SEAL team that are inherently small in them?[64, 65]

Lamont: Well, we aren't there yet. Only just a year ago, a year-and-a-half ago, did our first female graduates of the Ranger School succeed.[66] They're never going to be on those kind of teams.

Now first, they need to volunteer for some of this stuff. It's not like we had them all lining up to be tank mechanics. We didn't have these huge numbers of women say, "Oh, take me into infantry." No, many of the women don't want that. They have other jobs that they're very satisfied with. But for those who do and who could meet the physical requirements, hey have at it.

We had then the blow back saying, "Well, 20 percent or"—and I'm making that number up—"x-number percentage of women can't pass the physical requirements." Our response was, "20 percent" or whatever that percentage is, "of the men in those units now couldn't pass the physical requirements. They are not tested every year." Now, I'm not talking about Ranger and Special Forces A-Teams, I'm talking general combat companies. These all aren't Special Forces types. I said, "You must compare apples to apples here."

DePue: You are talking about infantry units that get deployed to Afghanistan, and you said yourself the conditions they're living in…

Lamont: Right.

DePue: …are primitive at best.

Lamont: So you'd have to be very careful. And we aren't to the infantry yet; we're close, but I think they're some elements now which they're allowed.

DePue: January 24, 2013, I think you're still there…

Lamont: Yes, I was.

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[64] "A-Team" is the primary operational element of a Special Forces company. A Special Forces Operational Detachment A, also known as an "A Detachment," consists of 12 Special Forces Soldiers: 2 officers, and 10 sergeants. All team members are Special Forces qualified and cross-trained in different skills. (https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/a-team.htm)

[65] The United States Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) Teams, commonly known as Navy SEALs, are the U.S. Navy's primary special operations force and a component of the Naval Special Warfare Command. As of 2019, all active SEALs are male and members of the U.S. Navy. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Navy_SEALs)

[66] The United States Army Ranger School is a 62-day small unit tactics and leadership course that develops functional skills directly related to units whose mission is to engage the enemy in close combat and direct fire battles. It is open to soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines in the U.S. Armed Forces, as well as select allied military students. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ranger_School)

DePue: … Panetta removed military's ban on women serving in combat. I thought that was a blanket removal.

Lamont: Yes, but it's not a blanket removal of what types of units they'd be assigned to, and I think infantry was not one.

DePue: You've mentioned this before—

Lamont: In other words, they're not going to be 11 BRAVOs. If they're assigned to an infantry unit, they're probably engineers or something of like medics, but not considered an infantry soldier.[67]

DePue: What were you hearing from your Marine friends about these kinds of changes?

Lamont: Marines were not real excited (DePue laughs). Marines, (both laugh) I found, were reluctant to change in most any respects, whether it was gays in the military or anything that seemed to go against the machoism of the Marine.

DePue: This is one that's happened since you've departed, too, but the whole question about transsexuals serving in the military?

Lamont: Yes. My personal feeling is anybody who is prepared to serve should be allowed to serve. And yeah, is there an integration issue? Probably of some sort. On the other hand, if they're going to put themselves forward to serve, and they can do the job, he or she, I think, should be allowed to serve his or her country.

The Army will adapt. It's always adapted. Remember, we adapted way before society in general on the integration of minorities into the Army. We did it with gays in 2009 and ten, minimal incidents. They will adapt because they're told to adapt. They salute and soldier on, and that's it.

DePue: Part of the issue, I'm sure you had to deal with at the time, was the growing concern about sexual harassment, which is very much linked, obviously.

Lamont: Yes. Yes, the SHARP Program, Sexual Harassment and Assault, S-h-a-r-p. All I remember is the last one is programs, Sexual Harassment Assault and Response Program, something of that nature, became an extremely big issue in 2012 and thirteen.

We were always mindful of it because the Army has policies and law against I, and we enforced it. Sexual assault exists outside the Army, but society itself doesn't typically respond to it. In the Army, it's a crime. It's a

[67] Engineers primarily supervise, serve or assist as a member of a team when they are tacking tough terrain in combat situations. (www.goarmy.com/careers)

violation of the Uniform Code of Military [Justice]. We actually watch for it, look for fraternization.

I think you're aware of what fraternization is. If you're a senior leader or commander over a junior female—and it wasn't all females, by the way—you can't do that. You can't get into a relationship in which you oversee their career in some manner or another. We enforce it.

Does it happen? It happens; of course it does. Hormones are no different for a twenty-year-old soldier than it is a twenty-year-old kid at college. When you have them in the same barracks, which we do now... We spend an awful lot of time combating this. They're unusual, but the very high profile incidents of a senior commander taking advantage of—this may be a general officer—taking advantage of a captain, a female captain, who's his aid becomes a huge public issue.

The one that took place while I was there, involved the Air Force. It involved the initial service, in essence boot camp, for the Air Force, in which you had three senior sergeants, drill instructors, taking advantage of their female cadets. This became big when a number of them complained. Actually I think it typically came from the wife of one of the drill instructors and maybe one of the victims.

[The] interesting part about that... Thirteen of them eventually came forward or were found out that they were involved with one or two of these drill sergeants. Of the thirteen, only three wanted to press charges. Ten of them said they were in love (both laugh), that they weren't being forced, that "He loves me," and that "We are not a victim." This was an argument, "You are victims; this can happen."

We had several instances in the Army itself that came on my desk. What are we going to do about it? We examined how we prosecuted these things, how we treated the victims, how we followed up. Did we do the right things? Did we separate them when there was a complaint? We had to make sure that there were no reprisals. There was a reluctance, we found out, of complaining, because they feared a reprisal. So we set up a system where they could complain to an independent person, without the perpetrator knowing who the complainant was, if that was possible. Obviously, they may have been able to figure it out. We tried to give them a victim's assistance personnel. Then the Congress was all over us.

As I said, we did studies every year in which we wanted to see the number of complaints. We asked people, "What's going on out here?" We actually found we had improvement every year. Unfortunate—

DePue: Improvement, as defined by fewer complaints?

Lamont: No, otherwise. Initially we... The way we viewed it, with what we put into place, we had more complaints because they were no longer reluctant of coming forward, and they allowed us then to take some measures to help prevent it.

Unfortunately, it's the initial—I say unfortunately, that's perhaps not right—but it's the initial commander, the intermediate commanders, who oversee the discipline and punishment. There's typically not a trial or court martial; it's the investigation to find out what really took place.

DePue: That's what society in general is struggling with right now, with the sexual harassment.

Lamont: Exactly.

DePue: How do you sort the ones where there's... How do you prove these kinds of things, and how do you then make decisions based on—

Lamont: We went through all of that. We were working day and night, seriously. The amount of time it took... In fact, the Chief of Staff of the Army, [Raymond T.] Odierno, one time said he would set his annual priorities, and two years in a row "Our number one priority is the SHARP program, the elimination of sexual assault in the Army."[68]

We had had two high profile issues: the deputy commander of the 82nd Airborne was involved, had a mistress. He was married. He broke up with the mistress, who then complained, who then went public. She had the emails. It was very high profile, the 82nd Airborne being one of our highest, top divisions, of course. This was a highly publicized issue. It resulted in the elimination and the retirement of the commanding general of the 82nd Airborne, who was destined for the four-star minimum, if not the top spot, in the Army.

DePue: Because he knew about and tolerated it?

Lamont: Arguably knew about it and tolerated it.

DePue: Arguably?

Lamont: I don't think there was ever any finding that he did. Well, I'm not sure; I'm not sure if there was **legal** finding. He wasn't like sent to court, but there may have been testimony in the court proceeding, of the perpetrator, that suggested

[68] Raymond Thomas "Ray" Odierno is a retired four-star general of the United States Army who served as the 38th Chief of Staff of the Army. Prior to his service as Chief of Staff, Odierno commanded United States Joint Forces Command from October 2010 until its disestablishment in August 2011. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond_T._Odierno)

he knew about it and didn't do what he should have done to stop it. That's what ended up on my desk.

I might get a senior sergeant or senior soldier of some...a combat leader, and he's been accused of sexual assault. What do I do with him? The recommendation is for his discharge and a dishonorable discharge. Then I'd see his combat record.

There's always a lawyer on the side, saying, "Here are the mitigating circumstances." He was deployed for three years; the woman was a willing victim, even though, all of a sudden...but it is adultery. The Uniform Code of Military [Justice] doesn't allow adultery. He's got two Purple Hearts; he's got a Silver Star; he has served his country so well. You can't put this soldier out. His commanding officer says, "I need this master sergeant. I need this guy." What are you going to do?

Odierno established a policy that a soldier's record does not come into play here. Personal victims' issues overcome the soldier's record, his military record. They need to be separated. As much as you felt you didn't want to do it to this guy—you'd think, How stupid was this guy?—we put him out. That'd be no retirement. If you got a dishonorable discharge, you did not get your retirement.

We had people with nineteen, twenty, twenty years, right on the edge of retirement. "Oh my God," and all of a sudden there's porn on their government computer in Iraq. He's got three kids and a wife back here. "Sir, are you going to put this guy out? Sir, are you not going to let him retire? Sir, he's served honorably. He's done all this. He's had four deployments." There were some very tough decisions we had to make.

Sexual assault was one thing. Some of the misconduct, like porn, I thought, was something else. When sexual assault was involved we... There had major case where a two-star in Iraq… No, I take this back. He was a full colonel, headed towards a star. His father had been a three-star. He [the colonel] got involved with an Iraqi citizen, not a military person, to the extent, I think, he even married her, in a way, in Iraq. This went to trial, and it was all over the place. He was found guilty, and the recommendation that came back from Board of Officers was that he be allowed to retire, under a general discharge. They had said, because he's the only support of his wife and three kids.

Every enlisted soldier and sergeant said, "This would never have happened, other than for the fact he was a full colonel, and his buddies took care of him." which is something you always get in the military, if they're seen as being given favorable discrimination in decision making, particularly of a disciplinary nature that involves officers versus enlisted. In many respects, I saw it to be true as well.

DePue: The one name you haven't mentioned—maybe this outside the parameters which you'd been talking about—is David Petraeus, who, obviously, had a relationship with a woman who was not in the military.[69]

Lamont: But yes, she was.

DePue: Oh, that's right.

Lamont: She was a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserves. I met David Petraeus in Afghanistan, three days before he flew to Washington and became the head of the CIA. Of course, he didn't bother to tell us that. I thought later, we used his plane; we flew back from Afghanistan to Iraq in his plane. I'm not sure it'd had time to get back to him, because I think he might have even left the next day. It was Easter Sunday, 2012. But let's distinguish this; he was never found to have been involved in an adulterous situation, while he was wearing the uniform, only after he retired and became a civil servant as the head of the CIA.

The person that he was involved with was a lieutenant colonel, a West Point graduate, who ran with him, as well as doing a book on him. He became involved in having an affair with her. When we found out about it, we pulled her file immediately and found that she had been a lieutenant colonel only three months. Under military procedures, we can pull back a promotion, a rank promotion, within the first six months. We pulled it, and she was reduced back into her rank as a major.

DePue: Was she discharged or any other—

Lamont: Don't know. I don't know what took place after that.

DePue: We've been talking about—

Lamont: I've since, by the way, had some conversations with him in a private capacity. We never brought that subject up (both laugh). He told me he was doing very well.

DePue: Yeah, I'm not surprised. He certainly is still one of the heroes of how things turned around in Iraq.

Lamont: Oh, he is. My XO, my executive officer, [who] served with him when he was the division commander of the 102nd Airborne—my XO was his S-2 or

[69] David Howell Petraeus AO is a retired United States Army general and public official. He served as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from September 6, 2011, until his resignation on November 9, 2012. Prior to his assuming the directorship of the CIA, Petraeus served 37 years in the United States Army. His last assignments, as a four-star general in the Army, were as commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Commander, U.S. Forces – Afghanistan. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Petraeus)

whatever in his general office command center—would do anything for the person. Those around him, who served with him, say the same thing.

Other general officers of his ilk, who didn't serve with him, not just general officers, either out of some degree of jealousy....thought he worked the publicity angle, self-promotion angle, way too strongly and was not as highly thought of, personally, by those folks. But those who worked with him loved the guy. I think all would agree he was an excellent soldier and an extremely bright individual, PhD, by the way, of course. [He] did marry the superintendent's daughter at West Point (DePue laughs). That might have helped...

DePue: That doesn't hurt.

Lamont: ...on the promotion side.

DePue: We've been talking about women in the military, women in combat roles, sexual harassment for quite a while. Do you think, either on the plus side or on the negative side, or perhaps no difference, in terms of the impact all of this has had on readiness, the ability of the Army to fight the fight?

Lamont: I don't think it's had an impact at all, unless it's been a positive. I think women have fit very well, women in services. And I think, for the most part, the services have done a pretty good job of integrating women into the services.

From promotion standards, I've seen them treated very well. Since also I had Army records, Board of Records, under my responsibility, I saw those records. Roughly 11 or 12 percent of the Army are women, maybe a little bit higher. I think, at one time, it got up to about 15 percent. We're a very capable organization and very accepting of women, in most respects. You're probably never going to get 100 percent acceptance, in some regard. We find, for the most part, our women, particularly in the professional level—by that I mean, who see the Army as a profession—are reasonably pleased.

They'll, I have no doubt, have some of the same issues that we see in society as a whole and how women are viewed. I actually think the military is better because we rule against it. We have policies against it, and by God, you'd better do it right, or there's hell to pay.

DePue: We're getting close to the end here, which probably is a great relief to you. I know you were there for just a few months during the time that the third Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel was in position.

Lamont: Yes.

DePue: Any comments about him?

Lamont: Only in [that] I did not think he served at the level of Gates and Panetta. Secretary Hagel, I think his heart was in the right place, but he was a sergeant in the Army in Vietnam, and other than bringing his senatorial experience, we felt he had a reluctance to challenge senior officers around him, the admirals and generals, because he was still Sergeant Hagel or didn't fully understand and appreciate the management of the services.

He was a ribbon cutter. He did not have the background, and experience of management and managing the Department of Defense is unbelievably difficult. So you are subject to the people around, who make the real decisions. After a while, I believe, he felt he served better as someone who—cheerleading isn't the right word—someone who should be the face of the services in all the good respects, cut the ribbons, do the announcements, things like that. But he was not a manager.

Gates and Panetta were managers. Panetta, having been the head of the Congressional Budget Office, he knew the numbers. He knew how to read a budget. Having been former chief of staff to the president, he knew how to talk to a general when he believed they were working him. He would put a finger in their chest. Gates would do the same thing. There was a reluctance, I felt, of Hagel doing that. I think that ultimately reflected upon his short tenure there.

DePue: When did you retired, then?

Lamont: I left late September. I always would say, October 1st of 2013.

DePue: And why?

Lamont: I had agreed to serve for one term. So, I'm in my second term. My wife was primarily in Springfield, so we were living apart. I was a geographic bachelor a lot, and it wears you down. But the ultimate issue, to me, was my wife had some health concerns. They turned out not to be as serious as we thought, but I missed her hospitalization, at least once if not twice, by the fact that I couldn't get there. The concern was it was a more serious condition than it, fortunately, turned out to be. I said, "It's time for me to come home."

It will have been almost five years, at the time. I said, "I need to go home." I was four months, five months, away from a federal pension (both laugh). So, [this was] maybe not the best decision on my part, because I think you needed... I guess you needed a full five years to vest a pension. I said, "It's time to go home."

I went and talked to the Army secretary. The only other reason I would have stayed is if I thought I had an opportunity to be the secretary of the Army. I was the senior assistant, by protocol. So, I went in and had a conversation with Secretary McHugh and asked him if he had any thoughts of

leaving. Whether or not I could have gotten the position, I don't know. I might have been willing to fight for it. But, I didn't aspire to any other position.

I knew the under-secretary of the Army was leaving to become the ambassador of Saudi Arabia. I was quite sure I could have that position, but to me, I saw it as just a continuation of what I was doing, and those are tough jobs. They are twelve hour a day jobs. The weekends, you could be cutting ribbons; you could be traveling, any number of things going on. So, you didn't have a life.

I think at that stage I was sixty-seven, sixty-eight years old. I didn't have a driver; I drove in to the Pentagon every day (laughs). I hated that commute. After a while living... I was living in an apartment, a condo, the same size as my last apartment in school (both laugh), 1,100 square foot, two bedroom, putting frozen dinners in at 7:00 at night, 8:00 at night, when I got in, microwaving or stopping by a McDonald's—that gets old after a while—when I had a real home back in Springfield, Illinois.

DePue: All of that's not necessarily best for your health either, I would think.

Lamont: Right. I miss that life; there was so much to be said about it. I loved what I did. I miss being part of the tip of the spear, frankly, on some of the very major issues. I find, in my return to Springfield, that you can easily be bored (DePue laughs).

Tom and Bridget Lamont attended President Barack Obama's second inauguration in Washington, D.C. in January 2013.

I'm still fortunate enough to have reason to go back out there several times a year. Every time I'm out there, I love it, and I realize, I don't think I could ever do this again, not on a daily basis, where it just never stops. But once it's part of you... I've talked to general officers and others of my predecessors, and we all miss it. We all miss it.

DePue: Did you have any overlap with your successor?

Lamont: No. Well, I stayed there. Once we realized that the health condition wasn't as bad, and I was advised that we had taken a fairly significant financial hit by going out there. Not only did I take lessor salary than what I had, but by having established a separate household out there, it was expensive. I was told that assistant secretaries have a shelf life (both laugh) after duty of two to three years.

I was fortunate enough to set up a LLC [Limited Liability Company] and establish a consulting business and was fortunate enough to be able to put together a couple of clients, which also gave me quite bit more time to come home and quite a bit more time for her to come out there, so we could enjoy Washington, without me being gone all the time. We could travel together out there. So, we did that, and it's worked out fine. I still do some of the consulting business, as you know.

On the other hand, as I walked out the door—and you haven't hit this yet—in my travels, I came to understand what our soldiers had done in World War I and World War II. I did that because I had some ceremonial engagements in Europe at our cemeteries. I represented the Army. Actually I didn't represent the Army, although I showed up for the Army in the 69th Anniversary of D-Day.

I was supposed to go to represent the Army, officially, but the budget issue came into effect, and we were told we couldn't do unnecessary travel. I'd already bought a ticket for my wife, and that was going to be part of our vacation, was to visit Normandy, France and attend the 69th Anniversary. We said, "Forget it; we're going away." So I paid my own way to go and "represent" the Army.

I realized what a fantastic organization the American Battle Monuments Commission was. They're the commission that overseas our military cemeteries outside the continental U.S. They're all as beautiful as Normandy. We have twenty-six of them; people don't realize that. General Pershing started them after World War I.[70] Some guy named Lieutenant Eisenhower did the first review of where the fallen were located, all throughout France and Germany of World War I and gave it to Pershing, who

[70] General of the Armies John Joseph "Black Jack" Pershing was a senior United States Army officer. His most famous post was when he served as the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces on the Western Front in World War I, 1917–18. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_J._Pershing)

then consolidated the burials to four or five different cemeteries: the Argon Forest, Chateau Thierry, Verdun. I visited those.[71]

I said, "I would love to be on that American Battle Monuments Commission." So, as I walked out of my office and retired as assistant secretary, I then started working with the president's office and, again, Senator Durbin to see if there was a chance I could be appointed to the American Battle Monuments Commission, which I was. It's an unpaid position, but you would go at least once a year, either Memorial Day or Veterans' Day, to represent your country at a ceremony at one of our cemeteries overseas.

They're almost all in Europe. We never buried a soldier in the land of an enemy. So, there are none in Germany, but we have them in Belgium; we have them in France; we have them in Luxembourg. General Patton, by the way, is buried in Luxembourg. The only one we have in the west is in Manila, the Philippines. Since we weren't involved in World War I in the Pacific, these are all World War II cemeteries. Manila is our largest; it has over 17,000 buried there, whereas we have 9,500 at Normandy.

DePue: The deaths that occurred in Okinawa, were they brought back to the Philippines or back to the states?

Lamont: Almost all are... We bring everybody back, who's next of kin wants them back. There are some buried in Hawaii, but that's a Veteran's Administration cemetery, and it's in terrible condition, terrible. All the monuments behind it are American that the ABMC [American Battle Monuments Commission] built for $14 million, but we do not operate the cemetery there. Some of our veterans are buried there, but most are buried in Manilla. Over 35,000 names are engraved on the wall because the bodies weren't recovered, in the jungles or Navy ships or aircraft. They're fantastic places.

We have one in Florence, Italy. It is an unbelievable cemetery, just south of Florence. Another, in Rome, is called Anzio, Rome, maybe ten miles south of Rome, beautiful. Lafayette Escadrille, we found the place in Paris; that was brought to our attention about volunteers from World War I who served in the Lafayette Escadrille.[72] We found that they were buried on the site there. A French trust was in charge of it. They didn't have any money. They asked us to take it over. We found thirty-four bodies in there, so we

[71] Dwight David "Ike" Eisenhower (October 14, 1890 – March 28, 1969) was an American army general and statesman who served as the 34th president of the United States from 1953 to 1961. During World War I, he was denied a request to serve in Europe and instead commanded a unit that trained tank crews. During World War II, he was a five-star general in the Army and served as Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dwight_D._Eisenhower)

[72] The La Fayette Escadrille was a U.S. unit constituted in 1916 under French command, made up of volunteers who came forward to fight for France during World War I. The escadrille of the Aéronautique Militaire was composed largely of American volunteer pilots flying fighters. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lafayette_Escadrille)

went over and took it under our wing and put money into it. We were able to raise some private money because we thought anyplace we have American soldiers buried, we should take care of them.

Now, we visited with our English counterparts, called the British Commonwealth. They bury them where they fall. If there's two people on an island, they're buried on that island, and the British are supposed to take care of them. But if you go to Normandy, there's an allied cemetery, three miles away from Normandy. It's got British, Canadian, Australian, Polish, and any of our allies. It's an allied cemetery, not quite the same condition as ours are, but they're beautiful.

Anyway, I loved being a part of that. I was on it until just this past December. We serve at the pleasure of the president. President Trump elected to put his own people in, and we were dismissed.

DePue: When you retired—I don't know if that's the right term to use—from the position you had in D.C., did you have some kind of ceremony or celebration?

Lamont: Yes. There was a going away ceremony.

DePue: Awards ceremony.

Lamont: It's in the Pentagon auditorium, and it was very nice. It's about an hour. The Army knows how to do this by protocol. [They] do a very good job of sending you off, a lot of good memories.

DePue (reading) "Remarks: The Honorable Thomas R. Lamont." So, you got to make some comments yourself.

Lamont: Oh yes. I did. I did about three or four minutes of thank yous to everybody who had been of great assistance and support to me. Senator Durbin was kind enough to attend and at least twenty-five general officers. The secretary, of course, starts it off. It was well done, and we all sang the Army song ["The Army Goes Rolling Along"] afterwards. It's on the back there.

DePue: Do you do something like that and maybe get a little lump in your throat when you're—

Lamont: Absolutely. You do. I don't know how many attended. And we do it for all the senior officers, as well. I attended Petraeus' ceremony. I attended Panetta's ceremony, with President Obama and Panetta's dog. He took his dog to the ceremony (both laugh). And the dog starts barking at the band. They did come and get the dog. The Old Guard marched in front, the fife and drum corps. No, it was quite the thing.

I miss a lot of the ceremonial things. I was lucky enough to be able to represent the Army at a number of engagements in a number of our embassies,

even the American Battle Monuments. When we were over there, we would usually be entertained. We're at the embassy in Rome and our ambassador's residence in Paris. For a little kid from Central Illinois, that was a lot of pinch me moments.

Everything I did in the Army, there was so many pinch me moments, "I can't believe I'm doing this." People would pay to do half the things I've been fortunate enough to do, the helicopter going over the Washington Monument and stuff like that. When we take off from the Pentagon, we head straight to the [Potomac] River. You fly over the Jefferson Memorial, and it's... Again, you get that lump in your throat, thinking, How lucky I am to be able to do some of this stuff.

DePue: Are there a couple of others that you might recall, off the top of your head?

Lamont: I recall laying a wreath. While we were in Turkey, I found out I was required to lay a wreath at the grave of Ataturk. Ataturk is considered the Father of Turkey.[73] It's not as simple as it sounds. Ataturk has a mausoleum. It looks very similar to the Lincoln Memorial.

You're about 100 yards away, and you follow two soldiers who are carrying a giant wreath, Turkish soldiers. You walk very appropriately behind them, and then there are soldiers lined up about every ten feet, all the way to the mausoleum. You get there, and then a protocol guy whispers in your ear, "Sir, stand on that metal piece of brass right there. They will play the Turkish national anthem. They will play the Star Spangled Banner. You will then step forward with the wreath, and the two soldiers carrying it will lay the wreath. You will stand there for appropriate amount of time. Then you must walk backwards; you cannot turn your back on the grave of Ataturk (both laugh); you must walk backwards." I said, "Thanks for telling me."

Things like that. I thought, I can't believe I'm doing this. It goes on from being, as I say... In Kosovo, I ended up. After that, I'm on my to Tbilisi, Georgia, which there are number of stories (laughs) that go along with that.

DePue: This is not Tbilisi, Georgia, United States?

Lamont: No, this is Tbilisi, Georgia, where you can see Russia from there (both laugh) We didn't know I would need a PSD, a Personal Security Detail, but apparently, I did. They meet us when we got off the plane, and they hadn't informed my staff. What the hell? We didn't have weapons.

[73] Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was a Turkish field marshal, revolutionary statesman, author, and founder of the Republic of Turkey, serving as its first President from 1923 until his death in 1938. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mustafa_Kemal_Atat%C3%BCrk)

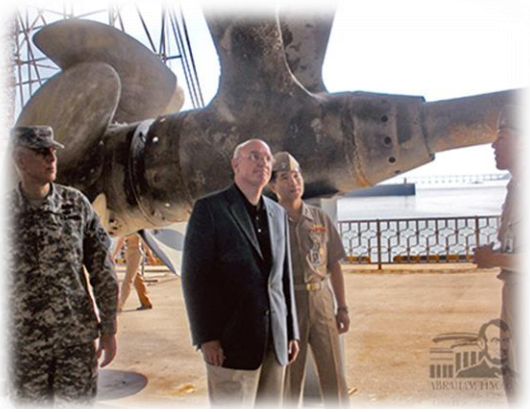
DePue: Did you get to the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone] and the 38th parallel in Korea?[74]

Lamont: I did. I did get to the DMZ, right to the table, where there's a line down the table, separating North and South Korea in a little wooden shack there. One side is their side, and one side is our side on the negotiating table. It's a very foreboding place, by the way.

Lamont visited the Demilitarized Zone at Panmunjom, between North and South Korea in 2011. Note the security guard with only half his body exposed. Fifty-eight years after the end of hostilities, it remains the most heavily guarded border in the world.

It's a lot different on the DMZ. Everybody is primed and ready to go. Lots of incidents happen that don't necessarily make the paper. I have something in my...up there, from a two-star South Korean admiral, naval issue. Remember when they had a ship torpedoed, and the North Koreans claimed it wasn't torpedoed. Oh no, they raised the ship. It's a monument. You walk under it, and they show how the explosion went in and not out. Then they have the pieces of the torpedo there. So, there was no question about it. I just want to make sure everybody understands the real truth. So, yes, I did that.

DePue: I've just a couple of quick questions to finish up. You were involved in an awful lot of things. We've talked about so much of it here, and it's been a fascinating discussion. Where do you think you're involvement, personally, had the biggest impact, long-term, in terms of the United States Army?



Tom Lamont visited South Korea in 2011 with the head of U.S. Army Forces/Korea and a South Korean admiral, observing a ship that had allegedly been torpedoed by the North Koreans in 2010.

Lamont: I'd say three different things. One, integration of gays in the military, because it was such a significant step forward in how we saw and treated personnel in the Army. Two, women in combat, again along the same way. What was I going to say?... Our deployments and how we handled our integration of the National Guard and our deployment cycles of our civilian

[74] The 38th parallel is the popular name given to latitude 38° N that, in East Asia, roughly demarcates North Korea and South Korea. (https://www.britannica.com/place/38th-parallel)

force, along with our active duty component, so much different than anything we'd ever done before.

When we blended them, not just sent them over by themselves, we blended within their active duty division or brigade as a matter of routine and brought service in our military to all communities in our country, not just where we have military posts. I think that's been a big change in how the public sees the military, because their neighbor might have been one to go. It might have been their son or daughter who wasn't a volunteer in the active component but was trying to get his or her education in the National Guard, for instance, in a National Guard scholarship.

When you say citizen soldiers, we are a country of citizen soldiers anymore, and how that's been accepted by more than just a bumper sticker of "Support Our Troops." It's so much more widespread. It's highlighted, I think, the service as what these people do, even though now we see less than 2 percent of our current population has ever worn a uniform.

DePue: To include veterans?

Lamont: Less than 2 percent of them have ever worn a uniform.

DePue: In part, because most of the World War II generation and the Korean War generation are gone.

Lamont: And we don't draft anymore. As I say, we have so many more people who go in; they go in for twenty-five years. When we had the draft I think it was typically in the 10, 11, 12 percent might have stayed for twenty years.

DePue: This is very much a similar question, but I wonder if there's one thing that really stands out that you're most proud of in terms of your military service.

Lamont: Distinguishing my actual military service, as a member of the National Guard, from what I did with as assistant secretary, I think my role and efforts with the assistant secretary far exceeded any accomplishment that I might have had with the National Guard. I enjoyed my service in the National Guard, but they could have done just as well without me (both laugh).

My service was certainly nothing particularly unusual, as a member of the uniform services, but as an ASA, you are different, and you have such a level of responsibility. When you are in the middle of two wars, and you see that this is something serious, and when you get those reports of body counts on your desk every single day, it does something to you.

DePue: Leaving that job, did you think there was something that still needed to be fixed, that still needed to be done?

Lamont: Oh well, I think it's very fluid. The budget situation always bothered me, when what we called sequestration put... It put absolute limits on your budget, and it was, I thought, sending us in a direction where we were going to bottom out. In essence we did, in a lot of respects.[75]

We had put into effect a reduction in force, before I left, which we are still in that, by the way. It was a five year fight, of which we were to be down to 450,000 active duty soldiers. We got to a high in 2010, late 2010, to 569,000 active duty Army soldiers. By the time I left, we had programmed a reduction, with the amount of money as we saw in the five-year budget cycle and with moving out of Iraq and actually moving out, to a significant degree, of personnel in Afghanistan. We were coming down to... At that level, we were going to go down, all the way to 450,000, which we believed was too low. But under the budget, as we saw, we didn't think we had any choice.

It's frozen now at 485[000], I understand. It actually got down to about 480[000], but Congress has now, under the new budget authorizations is supporting it to go up to like 487[000] or 489[000] right now.

DePue: Are you encouraged, now that the budget scenario for the military has improved in the last year?

Lamont: I only know it for the Army, but yes, it was hurting us. We argued before I left, "Sirs, given that our budget was so drastically reduced, what do your folks in the Office of the Secretary of Defense... What do you not want us to do, because we can't keep doing more with less. We're going to do less with less. What is it you don't want us to any longer do?" We put it to them just like that. Of course, we never got a response (DePue laughs). But we were stretched so thin, literally, on the personnel side.

DePue: I don't think I asked you, did you have a lot of opportunity to testify before Congress?

Lamont: I testified at least once and often twice a year. There's a subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee, a subcommittee on military personnel, which was chaired by Lindsey Graham when I was there. We testified at least annually, if not twice annually, before that subcommittee. The House didn't pay much attention to us, for whatever reason. But I only testified to the House once.

DePue: Which is where all budgetary matters are supposed to originate.

Lamont: Arguably. But not always (both laugh) when the Senate…

[75] Sequestration is the action of taking legal possession of assets until a debt has been paid or other claims have been met. (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sequestration)

DePue: That's what's in the Constitution, at least.

Lamont: The Senate had an idea too where some of that money should be. You didn't cover one thing.

DePue: I didn't cover one thing?

Lamont: Right. This is after my ASA position—maybe you're not interested in that—But within a year-and-a-half of me leaving, I was appointed to a second commission, which was not at my request. That was the National Commission of the Future of the Army, which was a lingering vestige of what I did as assistant secretary.

As I walked out the door, there was the beginning of a fight between the National Guard and the active duty component, again, as a result of budget issues. The Army had a helicopter going out of service, had reached it useable life. It was considered our scout helicopter. They had tried to replace it with something called the Comanche, in the late nineties. But after $3 or $4 billion, Gates decided we couldn't afford that helicopter. So, we said, "No."

The useful life of its predecessor was being taken out of service in... scheduled to go out in 2015. So the Army says, "Okay, we don't have any choice then. Our Scout helicopter will now be another mission for our attack helicopter, our AH-64, the Apache helicopter. The Guard has a number of these, and we're going to take them all in to the active component."

The Guard is supposed to mirror the combat effectiveness and readiness in all positions, as its active duty component. So we can go in and do the very same things they do. Of course, the Guard objects to that. Now remember, this is coming right at the heels, where the Air Force said, "We're going to do away with all A-10s," a special type of plane in the Air Force, often of which there are a number units in the Guard. But it's an aging plane; it's a plane from the late 1970s, I think.

DePue: Yeah, the seventies, early eighties.

Lamont: Early eighties. The Congress said, "No, you can't do this." They budgeted them out and, of course, the State Air Guard objected to it. After a year had gone by, the Congress reluctantly said, "We're going with the States; the A-10s will stay."

So, when this issue came up, about all the Apache helicopters **all** being shifted to the active component, a letter comes in, signed by every state governor (laughs), saying, "You can't do this!" Again, this is being formulated as I was leaving. I just recall our secretary of the army saying, "Figure out what we're going to do here, but just don't get me in trouble like the Air Force."

Sure enough, the Army went right there after I left. The Army ran right over the Guard's objection and put a timeline of all National Guard Apache units transferring in fifteen, 2015. So this, again, stirs up the congressional delegations of all the states. This is horrible, and it got hot.

Congress, of course, not being able to make any decisions on anything of controversy, then created a commission called the Commission on the Future of the Army, of which, number one, the commission was to decide on the appropriateness and the placement of the Apache helicopters, and two, while you're at it, take look of how the Army is designed for future threats, in terms of mission and manpower. Do we have the right balance between the active component and the Reserves? Are they in the right places? What are our future threats? Are we prepared to meet them?

The president then appointed me on that commission, a commission of nine of us. There're four four-star generals, all of whom had just recently retired; the head of Korea; the head of AFRICOM; the sergeant major of the Army; the CAR, the chief of the Army Reserve, who'd just retired; myself; two other think tank types; and the former comptroller of DOD, who knew where all the money was and what the real budget was.

Lamont attended a "Future of the Army" meeting in Stuttgart Germany in 2014.

DePue: Chief of the National Guard Bureau, maybe?

Lamont: No. They pushed me to be on this commission.

DePue: They being the Guard?

Lamont: They being the Guard, saying, "There's no representatives of the Guard here!" Four were to be appointed by the president, two appointed by the leaders of the House and the Senate, minority and majority leaders. I was one appointed

by the president. So I guess there was seven of us; there were three presidential appointees.

I kept getting calls from senior military types, particularly in the Guard saying, "You have to go on this commission?" I said, "No. One, I thought I'd have to give up my private clients. By then I was trying to be in business and make a living. Two, I was on the American Battle Monuments Commission, and the rule is, you can't serve on two federal commissions. I said, "Not happening; I'm not. If anybody wants to be on there, it's up to you; somebody else [has] to do it."

Pressure was put on, I'm told, and I do get a call then from the White House and [am] asked if I would serve on this commission. I said, "I'm on the American Battle Monument's Commission. I really enjoy what I do there. It's not time consuming; we don't get paid for it, but we think there's real role here."

This commission is set up to be a one-year commission, file a report and go away. Congress, when they created the commission, put a deadline for filing a report. They [the White House] said, "We understand that. We're willing to waive the rule about more than one commission because this is a short-term commission."

DePue: Who from the White House called you?

Lamont: The White House Personnel Office. They have so many different divisions, the but head of... I don't know, just personnel as far as I know. I said, "If you want me to do this, I'll do it." And then I thought, I 'll probably have to give up any client that has a conflict. Well, every other general, everybody on there, were in [businesses] now that involved the defense industry. So they waived...as long as it wasn't a direct conflict. We went through all the ethical filings, and so we did it. I did it.

I ended up being the vice-chairman of the commission. So when we file our report in February of fifteen, the chairman and I were held until May because then we had to travel and go out to talk to all the various stakeholders, all the senior leaders of the Army, West Point, War College, and explain to them what we did and why we did it. We made sixty-four recommendations that were some very telling concerns.

DePue: Then this goes way beyond just the issue of Scout helicopters.

Lamont: Oh yeah. That just turned out to be one or two of our sixty-four recommendations. That's the report right there, by the way. First, we had to determine what was our threats; what were our future threats? And, by future, what's the future, five years from now?

We thought, We can't do anything. Any recommendation we do will not be done within five years. So we said, "At least ten years out." We met with everybody. You know, first responders to an internal threat is the National Guard. So we met with the FBI head of internal security and terrorism in the U.S. These were all classified settings, by the way.

I visited Germany; I visited the Pacific Command. We all traveled to different places to meet with the folks on the ground. We had our folks in Korea. So we, again, talked about our mission, and the Guard's mission, and with the right numbers, and was 450,000, the right number in the active component? Reluctantly we said, "It depends on the mission."

Anyway, we made any number of recommendations, several of which required congressional legislation. We had a classified annex for certain people to read, where we had some real issues that we were concerned about. Of the sixty-four, I understand over fifty are in the process of being implemented right now. [I] just felt good about that.

DePue: The whole thing sounds like it started with the question about Apache helicopters and the active component going to grab them. What was that recommendation?

Lamont: We split the baby (DePue laughs), which, of course, we all knew we were going to do that. We reduced the number of Apache units in the state. It went from six states that had Apache units, to four. Then we reduced the number of airframes from twenty-four to eighteen in each unit.[76] Congress didn't go along with that, by the way; they're bumping them up. But we didn't have the money because our mission said, "Recommendations should also come within available budget numbers." So we had no choice [but] to do that.

There's a terrible pilot shortage in all the military right now, but particularly in the Army, over 700 short because everybody wants air assets. So we're spinning these guys; they're going out every ten months, eleven months. And the commercial airlines are raiding us. They're saying, "We'll take anybody who's flown. We'll retrain you to fly regular planes."

DePue: Is it still true that the Army has more airframes than either the Air Force or the Navy?

Lamont: Probably, if you count the helicopters, yes.

DePue: Yeah.

[76] The mechanical structure of an aircraft is known as the airframe. This structure is typically considered to include the fuselage, undercarriage, empennage and wings, and exclude the propulsion system. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Airframe)

Lamont: And your C-12s. Our biggest plane, I think, is the C-12, otherwise, which is a... I was thinking of the commercial name for it...King Air. A Twin King Air is a C-12.

DePue: Mr. Secretary, this has been quite a journey. In past sessions, you really painted a picture what it was like to work in the Pentagon, day-in and day-out. Today we got into all that travel that was encompassed with that job, as well, and an awful lot of the issues. It's like reading the front page of the newspaper, going through this thing.

Lamont: There was so much. As I say, I was the luckiest guy in the world to be able to do some of things. And the people I had around me... Yeah, my XOs rotated a couple of times, and they've been very successful. One that I knew would do a great job and [who] had been passed over for promotion, only because of his MOS, there just wasn't room for him to be a general officer at the time, because there was only one opening available, and the vice chief of staff's XO got it, the number two guy in the Army. I fought and eventually got him a star, and he's now the commanding general of Human Resources Command because he is that good. I **knew** he would be.

DePue: Who's that?

Lamont: His name is Jason Evans, down at Fort Knox, Kentucky, who I can't wait to visit before too long. Those guys and women that worked immediately for me, they'd do anything for me, and I'd do anything for them. Our camaraderie was so good; I couldn't say enough about those folks.

Tom Lamont, pictured with Major General Jason Evans, an officer with whom he worked closely during his tenure in the Pentagon. Lamont is proud that he was able to help Evans get his star.

In the Army, in general, I was very pleased to see the caliber of our senior officers. Not too many of them get to be three's and four-stars that don't possess the qualifications and experience and the educational background and the personality to be... And there were a couple of rough personalities. There are those who are going to be planners and the brilliant guys behind the scenes, and there are those who are warriors, take that hill types. You need them both.

For the most part, when you're at a three- or four-star level, you have personality traits that you know how to work. You know how to be a diplomat. As I say, there were a few rough edges, but for the most part, these folks know what they're doing. They fit in very well with whatever duty you give them; they adapt very well.

DePue: Any final words then?

Lamont: No, that's pretty much it. Again, I say I couldn't have been more fortunate. I loved what I did. I'm so pleased to have been part of an institution that truly is bigger than yourself.

DePue: Thank you very much, Sir. You've helped us preserve some history in the process.

Lamont: Hooah.[77]

(end of transcript #5)

[77] Hooah is a battle cry used by soldiers in the U.S. Army and airmen in the U.S. Air Force. Some say the term is another way of spelling H.U.A., which is an acronym for Heard, Understood, and Acknowledged. But the term can definitely be traced back to the Revolutionary War and into the Civil War. (https://www.thebalancecareers.com/origins-of-hooah-3354119)