Interview with Richard Mills

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Tuesday, the 29th of January, 2008. I'm here with Judge Richard Mills. We're here to talk about your experiences during the Korean War especially, but we're also going to get into subjects about your legal career and about your experiences during Vietnam as well. Today's session especially is going to be focusing on your growing up in central Illinois and into the Korean War itself. So without further ado, could you tell me when and where you were born?

Mills: I was born on July 19 of 1929 in Beardstown, Cass County, Illinois.

DePue: And what were your parents doing?

Mills: My father was an attorney, Myron E. Mills, and he was, at the time of my birth, in his second term as State's Attorney of Cass County. And my mother was Helen Greve, G-r-e-v-e, Mills. She was a secretary to the president of one of the banks in Beardstown when my father met her. They subsequently married and lived in Beardstown at the time that all three of their sons were born. I was born in '29 and my two brothers were two and a half years apart from me so that every two and a half years a boy came along.

DePue: Were you the oldest?

Mills: I was the oldest. Indeed so. We lived there for a period until 1933. My father was a Republican and recognized that the Roosevelt landslide was coming in 1932 and so he did not seek a third term as state's attorney, deeming it to be a worthless attempt. And of course I was born in July, and in October of '29 the banks crashed. So two of the banks in Beardstown that he also handled legal work for closed. He believed that it would be best to be moving because of the Depression, since the majority of his income base had been lost. So we then moved to Jacksonville, where my grandfather had practiced law years before, and also my father had lived there in Jacksonville, across from Illinois College. And he felt that if anything happened to him, at least his three sons could get an education. So that's why we moved to

Jacksonville from Beardstown during the Depression. We continued to live there in Jacksonville, and I did until I had been admitted to the Bar, and after the Korean War. We had lived there in Jacksonville all of those years, and that's where I went to school.

I went the first year to Lafayette School in Jacksonville, elementary. And then we moved to the edge of town, just outside the city limits. So we were now in the Mound school district, and I went to a one-room schoolhouse west of Jacksonville, one mile and one tenth from the city limits.

DePue: That was during grade school?

Mills: And that's during grade school, right. So I went to second through the seventh grade at Mound School where we had rows of classes. Each class had its own row and we had a series of very splendid lady schoolteachers who did an excellent job. I learned to concentrate while others and hubbub was going on around me, and I found that particularly of great benefit once I took the bench. So the one-room schoolhouse is indeed an experience, and it was a wonderful experience. I thoroughly enjoyed it. And only broke one leg and one arm at two different junctures during that period.

DePue: Now you mentioned your father and your grandfather were lawyers. So you have quite a legal tradition in your family.

Mills: Yes we do. My grandfather served with the Illinois 19th Volunteers during the Civil War. He was born in 1843. Was seventeen years old at the time the war—is that right? Yes, yeah, seventeen when the war began. And he enlisted in the 19th Volunteers from Illinois and served there for three years. So he served in all of the battles in Tennessee, Chattanooga, that whole series. And then of course came...

DePue: Was he at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson?

Mills: I believe he was.

DePue: The 19th: that obviously was one of the very first regiments that was raised in Illinois, so that had to be the very first year he enlisted.

Mills: He did. He did immediately. And stayed his entire enlistment, which was three years, I believe, at that time.

DePue: Vicksburg?

Mills: I don't know about Vicksburg, I just do not know about that.

DePue: Well, you mentioned this during lunchtime, but it's probably worth mentioning here. There was a generation lost there someplace.

Mills: Yes. Yes there was. Grandpa, for whom I'm named, and he was Richard Watson Mills. Grandpa was married to his first wife, who was Tillie Mills, and they were married twenty years when she passed away, but they had no children. He then married my grandmother, Nellie Mills, and proceeded to have three sons. The first one was George, but he passed away in infancy. The second one was Epler C. Mills, named after my grandmother's maiden name, and then there was my father who was the youngest, Myron Epler Mills. Grandpa was fifty-six, I believe, at the time that my father was born. So we have a span of a generation in there that was lost. But Grandpa practiced law. Came over to Virginia, Illinois from Jacksonville, where he had taught school and studied law in the office of Judge Cyrus Epler, a circuit judge there in Morgan County. He happened to be the uncle of the young lady that he later married as his second wife. Grandpa read law under Judge Epler and then was admitted in 1870 and came over by train the fifteen miles to Virginia and established his law office there in the county seat of Cass County.

He also developed a side office down in Arenzville in Cass County, which is on the edge of Morgan County in a big German community down there. A butcher by the name of Mr. Zulauf taught him enough German so that he could communicate with the German clients down there who had excellent farms, very neat, very well cared for, were very frugal people. A lot of good clients down there in Arenzville.

DePue: They paid their bills then.

Mills: Oh yes. They did indeed. They paid their bills because they had it to pay. But Grandpa was very successful and he began acquiring farmland very shortly and added parcels to it so that when he passed away he had a 700-acre farm right outside of the edge of Virginia. And that was passed into the family of course. He was very active civic-wise and was very active in the Presbyterian church and later served on the board of trustees of Illinois College. He maintained a practice in both Jacksonville and in Virginia and the peripheral one down in Arenzville something like one day a week.

DePue:This was your grandfather you're still talking about.

Mills: That's my grandfather.

DePue: So when your father returned to Jacksonville, he was returning back to his roots.

Mills: To a certain degree, because they lived in Jacksonville primarily during the winter months right across from the college, and then they would go to the farm in Virginia and live there during the summer months. Apparently that was the kind of practice that people did in those days, which is surprising to us in this age of fast mobility, because you either took the horse and buggy or you went on the train. That's the only mode.

DePue: Well, it suggests also that he didn't have a lot of livestock to take care of in the wintertime.

Mills: No, no, and as a matter of fact he did not do the work. It was always rented out, hired men in those days.

DePue: So your father in the 1930s finds his way back to Jacksonville and he's still in the law practice.

Mills: Exactly, exactly. He continued, and opened up his office there in the primarily civil practice.

DePue: Tough times. Everybody's tight in money. Was it tough for him as well?

Mills: Oh, you bet, you bet. But don't forget, in those days you could have domestic help for a dollar a day and it was called—what was it? Wages and tote. So...

DePue: Hadn't heard of that.

Mills: Yes, wages and tote. In the Depression years we had a lady who came in in the morning and worked and helped Mother domestically in the house, helped prepare the meals. And after dinner in the evening she went home taking whatever food and leftovers from the entire day. That was customary. That was just—that's the way it was. And if you had a dollar extra you could do that. But many people didn't have the extra dollar. And I mentioned the farm staying in the family. Let me tell you. During those Depressions years, that farm really helped take care of three families: my uncle's family, my grandmother, and us. And that helped. That was a big help. We had a hog every fall, usually in November, that they slaughtered and cleaned the hogs. Then all of that meat would be cut up and salted away, and that was great stuff.

DePue: Of course during that time the farm economy was especially depressed; had been since the twenties, since after World War I. But at least this is also during a time when the farms weren't so specialized that you could only grow one thing. Fast forwarding here a little bit, do you recall the day Pearl Harbor happened?

Mills: I do, as a matter of fact. It was a Sunday morning and I was on the living room floor at our home in Jacksonville. My father was sitting there reading the front part of the paper with the radio on, and I was looking at the funny papers on the floor.

DePue: You were all of ten at the—or twelve.

Mills: That time I was twelve, I was twelve. And I distinctly remember these announcements coming across. My father put down his paper, and we just listened to that. And when it was all over he said, "Well, there are two things that I must do tomorrow." Being Monday. "I've got to get a new car. And the second thing is, I'm going to Saint Louis to see if I can get back into uniform." And he did those two things in that order, knowing of course that there weren't going to be many new cars left around. And so he got a 1941 Dodge. He went to Saint Louis and he was turned down. He had been an ensign in World War I. He was one of the first Navy pilots that were winged—received their wings—at Pensacola, Florida, and of course

never went overseas, because by the time that was finished, the war was over. But he wanted to go in. They said, "We don't need lawyers. We don't need forty-five-year-old lawyers. What we need are engineers." And that's true.

DePue: I suspect your mother was rather relieved though, that they didn't need lawyers.

Mills: I think so. I think she was. But Dad was crushed. He really was very, very sorry about that, because he wanted—was very active in the American Legion and enjoyed that very much. So anyway that's how Pearl Harbor came about.

DePue: Do you recall anything about growing up? Those are your—you're old enough – your 'teen years. You're growing up in the Second World War. You had to have been following that very closely.

Mills: That's right. We did. And of course as you got older and communication became even better, I think you took a greater interest as you aged during that process. So I was going through eighth grade and high school—because I graduated from high school in '47 in Jacksonville –so we were going through all those war years at that time. I think the closest that the war really came to our family was that Captain John Robinson –who was my next-door neighbor, and about four years older than I am, or was at that time indeed –he was killed in duty. He had flown over the Burma Hump and did a lot of Asian duty in piloting and then was ordered back to be a training officer down in Texas. In an accident down there on the ground he was killed by a propeller. This was our next-door neighbor, and that really hit home. That was very traumatic, very traumatic.

DePue: Do you remember things like shortages and...

Mills: Oh my, yes. Everything was short. And of course, remember the white oleo that we had? You broke the little yellow pouch in there and you mangled and worked it around and that type of thing. We didn't care much for oleomargarine –our family. And of course being close enough to farms right around Jacksonville, and we remember two maiden ladies: their name was Tolan, and they still lived in the original house that had been in the family. They kept a couple of cows and they had wonderful cream and so just about every Sunday morning this was one of our errands, to go out to the Misses Tolan and pick up the cream. And oh yeah, that was great.

DePue: Well, it didn't hurt that you were living in the breadbasket of America.

Mills: It certainly didn't. It certainly didn't.

DePue: I'm curious. Did your father manage to make those tires on his new Dodge last the entire war?

Mills: Well, I'm not sure about that, because as a matter of fact the October before December, just three months before, he had taken a job with the Attorney General of Illinois as an Assistant Attorney General in the Springfield office, which is just

thirty miles from Jacksonville. And so he had that in mind at the same time about the car, because he commuted to Springfield.

DePue: On a daily basis?

Mills: On a daily basis. So he had been with the Attorney General since October, before Pearl Harbor. And that of course continued throughout the war. So now they carpooled, he and several others, particularly OPA had a number of men—Office of Price Administration established to ration critical items and to hold prices in line—in Jacksonville who worked in the Springfield office of OPA. And they and another one from Winchester came through, Fred Neat; they would carpool and drive to Springfield on a daily basis. So that's what he did during the war.

DePue: Well, your comment about the Office of Price Administration and having an office in a place like Springfield, which of course was the capital, emphasizes how much the federal government was growing and expanding at that time.

Mills: Oh just like gangbusters. It was an explosion. And every one of the administrative agencies that were created just to get this war effort—a phenomenal process. If you get to thinking about it and reading about it, it's phenomenal how huge this civilian substructure was to support the military; just never in history has anything like this gone on before.

DePue: So maybe the military didn't need a forty-five-year-old lawyer, but the civilian side of the war definitely did.

Mills: That's true indeed. That's very true. And many did that, the FBI for instance. Now the FBI had to change its entire view because up until then Hoover insisted that only lawyers and CPAs could be agents of the FBI. You had to be a lawyer. You had to be one or the other. And of course they specialized; the CPAs, they did the work in the accounting arena and fraud and so forth.

DePue: Any other stories that especially stick with you about the World War II era?

Mills: Naturally we in high school were pretty well insulated from any real serious hands-on World War II activities other than Boy Scouts. Now I was very active in Boy Scouts ever since the age of twelve and went on to become an Eagle Scout. I've been very active in scouting all of my life. I got so much from scouting, I'll never be able to repay it for what it did for me and my growing years. It was terrific. Well, of course we had all kinds of drives through the war: for newspapers, cans, metals, you name it, rubber, you name it. This was the way we did it. And this goes back to that civilian substructure of how important all of this was to the war effort. And it was great to be involved in it hands-on.

DePue: Now you said your father rushed right off to the recruitment office. So did you also get bit by the enthusiasm for the military?

Mills: Well, at age twelve I did. And I got more involved as we went along from the standpoint of interest in the military. I remember specifically when I was a senior, and this is '47, and it may have been when I was a junior, in fact I think it was, because I remember Bob Hemphill coming back from the Air Corps of the Army [at that time there was no Air Corp as a separate service] and he came out a major. Local attorney there in Jacksonville. And he stayed in the Reserves. In fact they didn't have to do much in those days about Reserves. If you just put your name in you stayed in inactive, and you'd get promoted. You got promoted to a light colonel. I was taking chemistry at the time from Pop Hickle. So Bob saw me one day and he said, "Do you think you could get my gold leaves electrolyzed so that they were silver? And I said, "Well, I'll sure check with Pop Hickle about it, our chemistry teacher." And sure enough, Pop said, "Oh yeah, be glad to do that." So I got them from Bob and we got those gold leaves made silver. [A gold leaf was the insignia of a major; silver was the "light" or lieutenant colonel; a silver eagle was the insignia of a full colonel, hence, "bird" colonel".]

DePue: Did you know that that meant that he was a lieutenant colonel at the time?

Mills: Well, he told me that he had been promoted. So I assumed without much prior knowledge that that was the case, yeah. And I remember Ted Rammelkamp was also promoted to lieutenant colonel in the Air Corps of the Army at that time. This was all before they created the separate Air Force. And so they were actually Army, but Army Air Corps.

DePue: Yeah, that would have been right at the cusp of when that occurred, '47, '48. Okay, so you graduated in 1947 and then what?

Mills: Well, then I went to college, went to Illinois College right there in Jacksonville.

DePue: Why did you select Illinois College?

Mills: Well, I don't think it was a matter of selection at all. What it really was, was the coming to fruition of an assumption. I actually lived only three blocks from Illinois College all my formative years. Illinois College campus was just like my playground, and it was just something that I always assumed. Now I knew my uncle had been to the Whipple Academy at the college.

DePue: The what academy?

Mills: Whipple, W-h-i-p-p-l-e, Whipple Academy, which was like high school portion put on by the college, run by the college. My grandfather had been a trustee of the college, and my brothers and I lived—in fact all three of us went to Illinois College. It was just a place that we assumed because we were so familiar with every building and every corner of the campus. And very comfortable, and it was just—used to go to all the football games and all this kind of stuff. It was a wonderful wonderful school and I just thought that's where I would be going. I just assumed it.

DePue: So when you enrolled there did you have a notion in your mind what you wanted to do with this college education?

Mills: Well, now that's hard to remember specifically. But I do know that I simply assumed I was going to go into the law. I'd had a grandfather and a great-uncle and an uncle and a father who were all lawyers. And I frankly don't remember having consciously thought about not going into law. I must say that there were a couple of times during the following years that for a brief period I thought –maybe at one time because of my scouting activities—I was so busy in scouting—that I might like to be a professional scout executive. But that didn't last too awfully long. And at another time I thought about the Foreign Service and the State Department and this type of thing.

DePue: And of course both of those like having lawyers involved as well. The Foreign Service –there are certainly plenty of positions for lawyers in the Foreign Service.

Mills: Oh that's very true, very true. It is not foreign at all, no pun intended, it's not foreign to that concept at all. But those didn't last long. I just always assumed that I would be going into law.

DePue: You were on that track. You were making good progress towards getting your degree, and then in June of 1950 the Korean War begins.

Mills: That is correct. It did indeed. And in fact we had several of my, not classmates, but fellow students at the college that were a year or two older than I was, left for service. And these were personal friends of course. But I was very familiar with them, had the same literary society and all of this together, so that we were close. But they were a couple of years older. But they left while we were still in college. And of course I didn't graduate until '51. And a couple of them as a matter of fact returned before I finished and had seen service. So I had of course been in contact with them, talked with them at great length, about some of their actions and activities. But that's true, it was in June of 1950 that the...

DePue: June 25. Did you follow the Korean War as closely as you had World War II?

Mills: I would say that it was more so. That we were more involved. Because after all, here we are twenty years old, whatever the age was, but in addition to that my major was history and political science. So this dovetailed in, I think, even more than going back to the high school years. And I must say this, that so many of the faculty in 1950 had served in World War II, a great many of them, and so their interest was by osmosis transferred over to the students; and I think that that just helped make all of us more aware of what's going on over in Asia.

DePue: What was the view of the faculty then, especially in the history and the political science department, especially for the ones who were veterans of World War II, about this war?

Mills: Well, they were very much in favor of doing everything possible to stop Communism. And so this was—I don't know if you'd call it a mindset –but it certainly was pro American involvement in this worldwide war against Communism, than what happened say ten and fifteen years later at the time of Vietnam. Now the faculties are totally different. They come from entirely different backgrounds and generations.

DePue: Do you know why they felt so strongly in that way?

Mills: No, I really don't. I don't, except these are all very honorable guys and when I say guys, primarily the men, I think. You didn't have very many females in poli sci and history.

DePue: Of course this is at the beginning –'47, '48 timeframe, when the Cold War really just begins –with what used to be our former ally during the Second World War. [the Soviet Union]

Mills: Exactly, exactly. And of course even during the war it got to the point where we didn't look too kindly upon a lot of the Russian...

DePue: When you say the war, it's the Second World War.

Mills: Second World War, yeah.

DePue: What was your particular view of what was going on in Korea at that time?

Mills: Well, at that time I think that most of us thought that here was an attempt to take over a very small country and gobble it up and to do so in a terrible way because the prisoner situation got a fair amount of publicity. We didn't see much of that in World War II as I remember. And it wasn't until the Korean that we started hearing about POWs [prisoners of war] in the...

DePue: The allegations of what the North Koreans and Chinese were doing to Americans?

Mills: Yes, yes.

DePue: That would have been probably 1951 when you started hearing that.

Mills: I would think so. I would think that that would be about the right timeframe, which would have been my senior year.

DePue: And you graduated then in May of '51?

Mills: Yes, yes I did.

DePue: What happened after that?

Mills: Well, after that I then went to University of Illinois Law School for a year. Then I was drafted into the service and so then began my progression and my passage over to Korea.

DePue: Okay, let's back up just a little bit. You've got that year. You must have known that the draft was out there. It was a very likely possibility you would be drafted. Did you ever considering enlisting, possibly going to an ROTC program someplace?

Mills: No, I just don't recall that I consciously considered any of that. I knew that at some juncture I would be going into uniform. But I can't honestly say that I was giving specific thought to how it would take place and in what manner. I know that I did think about it at one juncture. But the main thing was, I knew what my ultimate goal was, and so...

DePue: That was to be a lawyer.

Mills: Yes, to get into the law. And in any event—there was an opportunity, you could enlist –but we also knew from what the local board had indicated that it would do: it could give you an approximate time of when you would have to report.

DePue: The board being the draft board?

Mills: The board being the draft board, absolutely. I kept in close contact with the draft board, which was right there in Jacksonville, and so I knew that my chances were coming up at the end of that first year, and that sometime during the summer I would be going. So I didn't really see any particular point in enlisting or in volunteering to do anything in particular.

DePue: As I recall, if you were drafted it was two years and if you enlisted it would have been a longer period.

Mills: Three years. A minimum of three. And the Navy required four, if I'm not mistaken.

DePue: So maybe part of the rationale was only two years and I get back to what I really want to be doing.

Mills: Exactly –get back on track.

DePue: Okay. So let's get you to the point of being drafted then. When did that happen? We took a long time getting here.

Mills: Yeah, but we did, we did. That was in August of 1952. And so that came about and I went to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for basic training. As I mentioned to you at lunch, being at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri was almost climate wise like being in Korea. The summers are humid and hot –nothing like Camp Polk or anything down in that southern tier in Alabama or Mississippi and Louisiana –but it was plenty humid. But it was a good acclimation for anyone who was going to subsequently

serve in Korea, because the climate and the seasons are just almost the same as there.

DePue: What did your folks think about your going into the service?

Mills: Well, Mother didn't much like it, but Dad was proud. And my younger brothers were somewhat envious, I think, that I was.

DePue: Well, I suspect they had their chances later on.

Mills: Oh they did. They did indeed. And both served, indeed so –all three of us in the Army.

DePue: Is there anything that sticks in your mind about experiences at basic training? That drill sergeant you remember so well, or things like that?

Mills: Oh I do, I do. I remember the first sergeant, Sergeant Moyer. And he was an SOB.

DePue: A World War II vet SOB?

Mills: No. I don't think that he—he wasn't quite that old. But he was a doozy. And of course we had a field first as well as the first sergeant of the company; he was an old pro and he was good. And we got good training, very very good training.

DePue: Infantry training?

Mills: Yes, both infantry and combat engineers.

DePue: So you went to Fort Leonard Wood knowing you were going to go into the engineers?

Mills: No. I knew that I was going to go into basic infantry training, and then the advanced training became the combat engineers. But that's where they were down there. So I was not aware of that in advance, that the combat engineer aspect was also there at Fort Leonard Wood.

DePue: I suspect no one asked you what you wanted to do.

Mills: No, they didn't at that time. It was dealer's choice. And not much of an opportunity. But it was good training. I must confess that it was well done and I thought, for the most part, professionally handled.

DePue: Small arms training?

Mills: Oh yes, yes.

DePue: Small unit tactics, squad and platoon level tactics?

Mills: That's exactly right. On the basics. Then of course the engineer aspects of it became much more technical. Although they were still relatively general in terms. After all, they had to get this whole batch of new uniforms into the proper mode before they really got their real training in the units on the job.

DePue: This was combat engineer training?

Mills: Yes it was.

DePue: And during the time you're going through this training you don't know if you're headed towards Europe or to the United States or to Korea.

Mills: No. Absolutely not. You don't know. You simply don't. I think it's like reacting to the pressure at the moment, so that whenever G-1 personnel gets a call for something, then that's the thing that surfaces up and is taken care of.

DePue: If you had had a choice at that time what would you have wanted to do and where would you have wanted to do it?

Mills: Well, I don't think there was any doubt that I wanted to go to Korea, because I volunteered to. And at least from that standpoint my wish was granted.

DePue: Why?

Mills: Well, it just seemed to me that this was the war. And that's the one at the present time. And if you're going to do it you want to be a part of it, and so consequently that's what I did.

DePue: Was this while you were in the engineer phase of the training?

Mills: Right. It was at the end of the engineer training portion. Because it was at that time that I was called in to personnel and told, because I had put down on my—what do they call it—whatever the form is as to preference, I had put Korea down. And so when I was called in I was told that I had been selected for attending the Counterintelligence Corps School of the US Army, and did I still wish to leave Korea as my preference, and I said yes, I did.

DePue: This apparently came to you as a surprise.

Mills: Yes it did, absolutely a surprise. I was totally surprised, and I inquired how did this particularly come about. And I was led to believe by the sergeant in personnel without him absolute coming out and saying so, but left with the impression that because I had a college education number one, and that I was an Eagle Scout, that at least those two things were mentioned. And I just assumed that that had some kind of bearing in the selection process. I don't know.

DePue: That what the Counterintelligence Corps was looking for was people with intelligence and with some character perhaps?

Mills: Maybe so. I hope. I hope. But I rolled with the punch and said, "That's fine."

DePue: Now I'm going to back up. This probably won't take too long. Did you have a girlfriend or a steady at the time?

Mills: No. I did have a girlfriend but it was by mail and long distance.

DePue: Nothing too serious then?

Mills: No, not at that stage, no, not at all. But it was serious enough that she wrote to me the whole time: fourteen months in Korea.

DePue: Well, there's nothing more comforting than getting a letter from your girlfriend.

Mills: Oh I tell you, absolutely that's true as true.

DePue: So where did you go for the Counterintelligence School?

Mills: That was at Fort Holabird, H-o-l-a-b-i-r-d. Fort Holabird was in Dundalk, Maryland, which is just a suburb of Baltimore. The entire fort was made up of brick buildings; it was a very solid fine installation. It was at the end of the electric trolley system of Baltimore that goes out to Dundalk and the terminal is right about where Fort Holabird was. So I was there for whatever the timeframe was, and I graduated second in the class and...

DePue: You enlisted in August of '52? Or were you drafted?

Mills: Drafted, yes.

DePue: Went through basic training. You were in Korea by the spring of '53. So this had to have been in the winter of '52-53 then.

Mills: Yes exactly, right, right.

DePue: When you found out you were going to Counterintelligence School, what image did you conjure up in your mind of what this was? And then what did you find out it actually was?

Mills: Well, what you conjure up are all kinds of hooded spies peeking around buildings at night and so forth. No, quite seriously it was an excellent school. And they had experts as our instructors. I don't recall a single instructor except one captain. All the rest were majors and lieutenant colonels. And they were historians, they were language professors, they were the whole panoply. They were very very good at what they did and I was extremely impressed with all of them.

DePue: Did they have some OSS agents in there? [Office of Special Services]

Mills: We had some prior ones from World War II that had had some experience. But those were not just instructors. Usually they came in as a special lecture type of thing. But it was a fascinating instruction and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

DePue: What skills were you being taught?

Mills: Well, you were being taught skills of interrogation and Q&A and counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and particularly some tactical intelligence. In other words, when we got to Korea we found that both prisoners of war and line crossers, you needed to get first of all to whatever tactical local on-the-ground intelligence that might be helpful to the troops that was missed the first couple times that they were interrogated, not by counterintelligence but by G-2 [Intelligence] people. And so if you missed it on the first go-round, hopefully we'd pick up something that might be of assistance, which would of course be given immediately to your G-2 and then they would pass it up to the proper channel. Otherwise you're concerned more with their background, where they came from, where were they heading, and all of this.

DePue: Did you get some hands-on experience doing this while you were in school? Or was it all classroom environment?

Mills: No, it was primarily classroom, primarily. We would have some demonstrations, I would say, and some role-playing where they would have regular scripted data and you'd play the Qs and they'd give the As and this type of thing. But most of it was classroom.

DePue: Okay. And then you're off to Korea.

Mills: Then I'm off to Korea.

DePue: Did you get a leave before?

Mills: Oh, I did. I got a leave and I think it was two weeks if I'm not mistaken. But what I did, I flew on commercial. I flew from Baltimore to Saint Louis to Springfield on Ozark and then I had a couple of weeks at home; I didn't spend that much time at home, maybe ten days. And then I flew from there to Oklahoma, and I stopped off there for three days to see my girlfriend who wrote all those letters the next fourteen months.

DePue: Well, you didn't meet her in Oklahoma. What was she doing there?

Mills: I met her at the Boy Scout Ranch of Philmont, New Mexico. Her father was a geologist at Oklahoma A&M and was on staff every summer at Philmont. I was there for six summers on staff and so that's how we met there. So then I flew from Oklahoma to San Francisco. And then Camp Stoneman—yes, Camp Stoneman, and then I boarded a Flying Tiger at San Francisco and we flew to Hawaii. About halfway in between we lost an engine, and so they decided to continue and limp on because it was the point of no return, and we went on in. Because they had to do

some work on the engine we had an actual extra –I think thirty-six hours –instead of just refueling and going on. And so at least we had a little time there on that nice island.

DePue: What island was this again?

Mills: Hawaii at Honolulu.

DePue: Flying Tiger.

Mills: That was a commercial airline that flew all over the Pacific and it was chartered to take troops.

DePue: So that's the name of the airline or is the name of the aircraft?

Mills: No, it was the name of the airline, Flying Tiger. They called each of the planes a Flying Tiger of course, but yeah, it had nothing to do except name-wise with Chennault's old Flying Tigers.[famous for flying "the hump" between China and India in WWII]

DePue: Yeah, see, I was conjuring this image of a fighter plane in China.

Mills: Yeah with all those teeth and everything. [gaping mouth with big teeth painted on the nose of Chennault's planes]

DePue: Yeah, it wasn't working. Didn't think you were taking that over there.

Mills: So then we flew from there to Midway. No, not Midway. Wake. To Wake Island, then stopped and refueled. And then on into Japan, into the airport at Tokyo. Starts with an H. Well, whatever it is. So when I got to Tokyo –so this was all by flight –I was there for a few days at the 441st Counter Intelligence Corps Detachment, which was the main one for all of FECOM, [Far East Command] and we had briefing at 441st. And when I say we, I'm talking about the four of us that were on the whole flight over together, all going to Counter Intelligence Corps detachments. So then we had the briefing at FECOM, and that was about three, four days. Then we got onto a Globemaster [very large cargo plane] at Tokyo and those bucket seats and we flew from Tokyo to Pusan. Got to Pusan and unloaded some troops and different people. And then we flew from there to Taegu and dropped off a couple more, and then on into Seoul. Got to Seoul, and we were picked up by 8th Army CIC [Counter Intelligence Corps] jeeps, which was the 331st, and taken to 8th Army CIC Headquarters, which also had plenty of rooms and space for bunking purposes. So we were there for, I'd say, a total of six days. And then I was sent out to K-19 or K whatever it is, little airbase there. And I got into an FO [Forward Observer] Cub with the pilot –two-seater –and he flew me up to Corps Headquarters. And when we landed at Corps...

DePue: Which corps was that? The 9th?

Mills: I'm trying to remember. Is it I Corps or IX Corps? The 3rd Division was with—I think it's I Corps.

DePue: Could very well be. Go ahead and I'll figure this out.

Mills: Okay. So we got to I Corps and landed, and here was a jeep from 3rd Infantry Division CIC. Two of the agents were there to pick me up. And off we went to 3rd CIC Headquarters. Detachment Headquarters.

DePue: So when during this whole time did you find out that you were going to end up at the 3rd ID, 3rd Infantry Division?

Mills: I don't think that I found that out until our briefing at FECOM in Tokyo, because I think...

DePue: FECOM is Far East Command?

Mills: Far East Command. I'm sure I didn't. I knew that I was going to Korea from Holabird, but I didn't know what unit. And it wasn't until FECOM that they had it all worked out.

DePue: Okay. We have a map here of Korea. Actually this is the 8th Army front, western sector, and it's dated March 1953. So I know that you ended up over here right about the operations at Outpost Harry. So this sector right here is the 3rd Division, and I just checked, and it looks like at least in March it was in 9th Corps. Now I suspect later on you guys moved over here to I Corps area, which is farther west.

Mills: Yes I think maybe that's true. Hard to remember.

DePue: But we don't need to be bogged down with that.

Mills: But I do know we're north of Chorwon, and it's right somewhere in the Outpost Harry area. Just where I'm not...

DePue: What was your first impression of Korea getting there?

Mills: Oh, well, first of all I expected the area to be more mountainous than anything around Seoul was. So your first impression is where you land. Pusan of course is down right on the coast, and a lot of fishing, all of that through there. But by the time you get into Seoul—and Taegu was more flat.

DePue: Pusan is not flat though.

Mills: No it's not flat, but it is on the coast. The hills go right on down to the water almost, okay? As I recall.

DePue: Yeah, it's fairly mountainous. It's not nearly as mountainous as where you were going to end up though.

Mills: No, that's true, that's true, yeah. I've been back to Pusan once, by the way. I was only there that one time to fly in and out. And then on one of my trips back to Korea we did go to Pusan. Stayed at the Commodore Hotel as a matter of fact. It was very nice, had a good one. Well, so anyway.

DePue: But Korea was nothing like your last visit to Korea.

Mills: Oh my heavens no. No, by a long shot. Of course the obvious thing was the primitive condition of so much of the territory that you saw, and particularly that we went through, and where we were stationed, and where we were billeted around there. Our CPs [Command Posts] were always very close to—well, what? The main transportation, the M—what was it called? MSR. Close to...

DePue: Main Supply Route.

Mills: Beg your pardon.

DePue: Main Supply Route.

Mills: Yes, correct. And so we saw a lot of shacks and a lot of poverty.

DePue: So again your first impression of the sights and smells of Korea was...

Mills: Oh my, you add the term smells, and boy, that opens up a whole new Pandora's box. That sure was different. The kimchi and all that. [pickled cabbage with lots of "hot" and garlic] I've learned, by the way, to enjoy kimchi very much. I can take it. I can't take it as hot as some of them but I do enjoy it.

DePue: So what were your first couple of days like once you finally got to your unit, the 3rd Division Headquarters and this detachment of counterintelligence folks there? First couple of days.

Mills: First couple of days were primarily meeting with the administrative officer who was a warrant and making sure that all the papers were in proper shape and my file and so forth and then meeting with the ops [operations] officer. And our ops officer was a guy by the name of Smith. Smitty. Smitty was a captain in the Reserve on active duty. But at the same time he was the senior warrant officer of the United States Army. He was RA; [Regular Army] he was the Chief Warrant Officer, the senior one, in the entire United States Army.

DePue: But you also said he was a captain.

Mills: Right. And he was on active duty –called in his Reserve rank during the Korean War. But he was a lifer. He'd been in for twenty some years, whatever it was, and the guy was good, and he had a great...

DePue: And his specialty was counterintelligence?

Mills: That's right, exactly.

DePue: So you're thinking that first couple days, "Boy, I'm lucky I've got somebody who's like the expert on this."

Mills: That's right. Smitty was very well liked by everybody and he was a true blue and a straight arrow. So everybody enjoyed it. Well, most of the time though I spent thereafter—and this is only taking a day, day and a half at the most—is to go out with the other agents on their rounds to their various units and to see what is happening and what intelligence they're pulling in, what information they're getting from the various regiments and battalions. The counterintelligence personnel, the agents assigned to handle units, were not permitted to go beyond battalion level. They were supposed to not ever go beyond down to company or to anything below battalion. So consequently most of our contacts were with the S-2s of the regiments and S-2s of the battalions.

DePue: S-2 being the intelligence officer.

Mills: Yes, that's correct. And so those were the main ones. And we kept a pretty tight schedule and you couldn't just go into a unit's area cold turkey. You had to get in and the first thing you did was to check in with the S-2's office so that everybody knew you were there; for both security reasons and for doing your work you just had to do it. And then most of the units were pretty tight on getting into. They had their perimeter guards out and everything, and you were challenged, and you had to show your credentials.

DePue: Did you drive around the Korean countryside in jeeps?

Mills: Yes, absolutely. It's almost the only way we traveled at all, was by jeep.

DePue: Did you oftentimes have Koreans with you?

Mills: Oh yes, always had a Korean, at least one, who was an interpreter, because we needed them badly.

DePue: Was he a member of the Korean Army? A KATUSA? [Korean Augmentee to The United States Army]

Mills: Usually a KATUSA. The ones in the Korean Army had their own hierarchy and had their own CIC units. It was very usual, customary, for any of us to turn over a line crosser or a POW to the Korean counterpart CIC once we were finished. And I must be candid: unless you speak a language—and you have to use an interpreter all the time, it becomes pretty difficult to get any solid information out of them that's useful until it's been—until they go through another vetting with someone who does speak the language, which is the Korean CIC. South Korean CIC. And they could be pretty tough on them.

DePue: Well, we've been skirting. You've mentioned a couple of times line crossers versus POWs, and you're getting into the nature of what you do. I'd like to have you explain in much more detail, if you will, perhaps, if you can walk through what a typical mission, or you go out to a regiment or a battalion, and what you would do, and if you encountered somebody who had been taken captive, and then how you process them, that would give us a better idea of exactly what's going on here.

Mills: All right. Almost everyone—well, all of the regiments and most of your battalions also had a section that was CA, Civil Affairs. If we've got a POW being captured, the first thing that we do is to get them from the source of the apprehension. So we've got some patrols out. The patrol picks up a POW, sends it back –and don't forget we were in the static portion of this war now, wrapping it up. When they come back with this POW, the first thing that they do is with their S-2 people: interpreters try to get out of them whatever tactical intelligence they can before we get them.

DePue: Tactical meaning things that would have a direct implication to what's going on in the frontlines?

Mills: At that moment, exactly. And once that has been exhausted—and quite frankly sometimes it overlaps with the South Korean counterpart in their army, and they will turn them over to them, and we won't see them. This frequently happened, because they're not so much concerned with counterintelligence, they're more concerned with direct tactical as of what's hot at the moment stuff. And so they want to wring them out as far as they can get them. And once they've done that then frequently they turn them over not to us within the American chain, but over to the South Korean Army CIC, or intelligence people in G2.

DePue: Let's take another quick diversion. What's the difference then between intelligence and counterintelligence?

Mills: Yes. Intelligence is the umbrella covering any kind of information that you can glean from the enemy. And then it's broken down into the tactical, which is what we need to know right now to help the infantry of our country or of our units in their current fighting situation. And then after that in priority only comes counterintelligence or counterterrorism or counter- whatever we're talking about for the long haul and in the more general picture. Really what we need most is the tactical right now rather than that which we can defer until later and still pick up and glean out that will help us in other ways. And so frequently we never saw the POWs. But the ones that we did see, did get a hold of, we would try then to get the bigger picture from them. And I must be candid again to admit that you could only say that it was partially successful.

DePue: You say you didn't get the POWs. Did you get what you referred to as line crossers?

Mills: Oh yes.

DePue: And the difference between those two?

Mills: Okay. Now that's even more important, because that's where we get much more of our counterintelligence usage, is from line crossers than it is from POWs. POWs are grunts for the most part, right down on the line. They're in combat, and they don't know much beyond what's in front of their face.

DePue: They're captured in some kind of a combat incident?

Mills: Exactly. And consequently they don't have much value from our standpoint in counterintelligence. But they can have a lot of information from [the] tactical side. That's why they were passed over directly laterally from our people on line to the South Koreans on line, and not really bypassing us, because we're still secondary in the chain. It is primarily the tactical that they're concerned with in what they want, and since we have to use interpreters to get anything, ours is always less than perfect. But boy, when the South Korean intelligence G-2 S-2 people got ahold of those POWs, let me tell you, they could make them sing like canaries, and got all the tactical.

DePue: That's what I was going to say. I suspect that your average Chinese soldier would prefer not to end up in the hands of the South Korean.

Mills: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. And certainly the North Koreans in particular didn't want to end up in their hands at all.

DePue: How did interrogation go for you then? What kinds of techniques could you use?

Mills: Well, relatively few, because we always had that layer of the interpreter involved. I'm thinking primarily that the nuances of Asian languages are so complex and so complicated that when you have an interpreter involved you're layering in another insulation that's very difficult to get through, and consequently it wasn't easy, it just wasn't easy at all. It was work, and you really had to be thinking in terms of where they're going, the direction they're coming from, what they were doing there, and what they're likely to be doing here, and where are they heading, and what are we going to do about it. It all became pretty complex.

DePue: Again you've used the term line crossers. That implies that these are soldiers or civilians perhaps who made a conscious decision, "I don't like what's going on. I'm heading south."

Mills: There were a few of those. But as that war of attrition for the last two years of the war, that became less and less and less. In other words getting a hold of a North Korean or a Chinese that wanted to change sides or just get the hell away. Remember, there was a lot of that in that prison situation down in Koje-do.

DePue: Koje-do Island –that's where most of the prisoners were kept –islands off the southern coast.

Mills: And then when we got to Operation Little Switch and Big Switch, many of them did not want to go back. And of course this posed a tremendous problem. It's the same way; most of those had been taken before they got into the static DMZ [De-Militarized Zone] portion of the war –which was essentially what? thirteen –no, it was almost two years. It was eighteen months, nineteen, twenty months, something like that, short of twenty-four. And we didn't get many of those during that period because we were in a...

DePue: So I guess I'm still unclear then what you mean by line crossers.

Mills: Okay. A line crosser is personnel coming across from the north and over the DMZ into our area and we don't know what the hell they are. We don't know whether they are a North Korean or a Chinese camouflaged as a civilian. We don't know whether they are a North Korean civilian or a Chinese civilian coming down and across or for what purpose, where they're heading, and what they intend to do, the whole nine yards. Now that's a line crosser.

DePue: So they were by definition not in uniform.

Mills: That's absolutely correct. They were not in uniform. If they were in uniform they were, of course, treated as a POW.

DePue: And what kind of techniques were you allowed to use to get the information from them?

Mills: Well, nothing by way of physical force. We were definitely instructed that we cannot hit them. They can't be beaten and so forth. Now I can tell you that the South Korean forces didn't have that rule. But we did. We could not use physical violence of any kind.

DePue: So were you treating them as if they were prisoners of war according to the Geneva Convention?

Mills: Exactly. They were treated totally humanely. We operated only by interrogation; there was no waterboarding or...

DePue: Well, yeah, we're flirting around this because of the conversation that's been going on in the country for the last five or six years about the war in Iraq right now.

Mills: True.

DePue: Any reflections on your experiences versus what you're hearing and reading about, with what we're doing now?

Mills: No, no, I can't say that I have any hands-on or observable thoughts. Of course we didn't have the Guantanamo situation. [Guantanamo Bay in Cuba; "Gitmo"; a controversial prison later during the second Iraq war]

DePue: But one similarity, I'm saying, is you were dealing with people who—well, they're not in uniform; you don't know if they're really a member of a military force. They could be spies, they could be just your average North Korean that got fed up or Chinese who got fed up. Or it could be somebody who's deliberately trying to get into the POW camps in the south, correct?

Mills: And that's true. And some of them did do that. In fact, over that whole time frame, they had a huge number that actually wanted to do that. Isn't that right? That's my recollection.

DePue: Yeah it's probably worth mentioning to people who are listening to this, "What in the world are they talking about?" The Chinese and the North Koreans both deliberately were slipping in agents into the camps in Koje-do and other places to instigate insurrections, to cause problems, to organize the prisoners. It was a huge problem for the Americans and the South Koreans.

Mills: And for quite a while it was a huge success. They did manage to do exactly that.

DePue: They took over a prison camp and captured the camp commandant and held him captive for a period of days.

Mills: Exactly. And not only that, but as we mentioned at lunch, you got at least two general grade officers who were busted and sent back to the States just because they couldn't handle the situation.

DePue: So when you're doing these interrogations you have all of that in your mind: Are these people intending to get down there and cause havoc?

Mills: That's exactly correct. And that's just one of the aspects. We also want to know where they're heading and what their background is. Do they have any skills? Have they been trained in anything? I

s it something that they can utilize to our disadvantage back down here? Now I must point out that we have a bunch of layers of involvement here. Ours is—when I say ours I'm talking about counterintelligence personnel and agents—we're with the combat troops, and their regiments and their battalions, and we're sifting for all of this intelligence that we can utilize and hope that it counters whatever intelligence they have. But we worked closely with the CA, the civil affairs, and we worked closely with the employment people down in Seoul where they're hiring for all of the units around, all the American units either on line or at corps, Army level, all over the country. And so we worked with them in constant contact. When we get these line crossers, they are inquired of, they're interrogated as to what their background is, where they're coming from, what they did, where they're heading, what they want to do, etc., etc. And so that's what we're getting in. Now we share that information with CA, with Civil Affairs; they have their own compounds at division level and at regimental level. So they get them from battalion level and they will be interviewed. They'd be interrogated. And whatever information we can get we utilize and pass on. And then they go into civil affairs and get held in their compound. Then

eventually they are sent down to Seoul or to corps or to wherever. When they get there, there's another vetting and another interrogation system using our notes and our input to follow through and to find out what these people are doing. Are they really what they say they are? Are they really heading to where they say they're going?

Since there's also the employment aspect, they're vetted through the employment people too. If they say they want a job, they're going to get a job; they want to get in with the American workforce.

DePue: To work with American units?

Mills: Yes, absolutely, that's the best job in the entire country. Every civilian, everybody wants to work for the Americans.

DePue: So is it part of your responsibility in all these layers to sift all the bad apples out to make sure that the only ones who are really sincere end up working for the Americans? God forbid if a bad one gets...

Mills: Oh, my, I say, that's tough, that is really tough. But fortunately enough, we had a very good success rate with our line crossers. But the POWs is a whole different category that's very very difficult to crack. Particularly when you're talking about a language that none of the Americans could possibly...

DePue: Well, describe what these folks looked like when you ran into them –the POWs and the line crossers.

Mills: Well, the few POWs that I saw were scraggly and their uniforms were not necessarily in tatters, but they'd seen better days by a long shot. They were hungry and they were really—well, they were dirty. They were dirty. They obviously had not gotten to a showerhead for a long time. And most of them frankly were hungry. And they not only looked it but they were.

DePue: Hungry as in close to starving?

Mills: Yes. Yeah, very close to that. And totally dejected. Just absolutely. They were at the bottom of the pile, bottom of the heap. And in a sad way it was that way. Most of your line crossers were of course in—they were in civilian clothes of some kind. And usually they were not in as bad a shape as any of the POWs. They had somehow taken care of themselves to the degree that they were relatively clean. And their clothes looked like they were still together, but it wasn't as bad. But many of them were carrying nothing. I mean they were just without anything. And if they had anything at all it was a small thing that they're carrying, a small bundle of cloth with something in it wrapped around. And they almost all wore open sandals of some nature, some of them made out of a piece of tire rubber. A lot of that. With just a peg up through where the big toe joins. And of course they were always—when they got them to civil affairs, they had regular delousing stations. And they'd get cleaned up and they'd get treated.

DePue: Doused with DDT I suspect.

Mills: Yeah that's exactly it. Head lice and all that kind of stuff. But after all, these people were living in virtual poverty. And it was tough. In fact many of them would tell you quite honestly that the best thing that ever happened to them was to get into American hands and get into civil affairs compounds where they got three squares and bedding and new clothes.

DePue: Not to mention deloused, which they probably liked afterwards.

Mills: Afterwards sure. Anybody I would think would. Trying to think. Anything that...

DePue: Are there any particular incidents that you recall when you were involved, and you were one of the people with a counterpart South Korean who was doing the interrogations, right?

Mills: Yes, with our interpreter.

DePue: Are there any specific incidents that really stick with you?

Mills: Well, for the most part the ones that we caught in crossing the lines, I would say probably 75 percent were those who are from the North Korean portion of above the DMZ and used to have ingress and egress across that area down in the southern portion totally freely; they had relatives, and the families pretty well bracketed the whole thirty-eighth parallel. Some of the family was up above it, and some of the family was down below it or going all the way to Seoul. There was a lot of relationship. And these are people that simply wanted to get with their family. We didn't have any trouble with anybody coming up from behind us wanting to get into the north of the DMZ. Not a one. But that's the way it was. My houseboy, for instance, he came from Pyongyang. That was his home. And he had an older brother who was very high up in the police force –civilian police force –and he and his elderly uncle were the only ones out of his family that made it all the way down at the beginning of the war as refugees and came across that bridge of no return and stayed. His name is Kim Sil Hui. George is what we called him. Korean houseboy.

He since went on to university and served in the army and became a very successful businessman in Seoul. George and I have been friends for fifty years. He's visited us and stayed in our home and I've stayed in their home and we've been to their home and vice versa. We've done this for years. And he and my interpreter—and I've been in the same thing with Oh Byung Chul. He was my interpreter for almost the entire time I was there for my fourteen months in Korea. He then went to Europe and did some more studying. He had a fantastic linguistic ability. Different tongues: He speaks French, Italian, English, everything, Japanese. And he came to the States. Both of them educated all of their children here in the States. We've just kept up a friendship over all these years. He's now in San Francisco. I'm going to be sitting in San Francisco in another few months with the Court of Appeals, and so while I'm there we'll have dinner. His wife, Song Hee, is

a stewardess with—is there a JetBlue? Okay, with JetBlue.[commercial airline] And so we'll get together and so forth and so on.

DePue: Those are amazing relationships. You've been able to keep in touch all these many years.

Mills: Oh yes, yeah. Not only that, but the three of us went on safari in Kenya one time, one year, 1990 as a matter of fact. Yeah, had a wonderful time.

DePue: You were working with the 65th Infantry...

Mills: Yes, the 65th Infantry Regiment, which is one of the three regiments of the 3rd Division. That became my responsibility.

DePue: That was the Puerto Rican regiment, was it not?

Mills: That is right. Right. There was still some feeling about the early experience of the 65th early on in the war. They had a problem where they had Anglo officers and Puerto Rican Hispanics; the entire regiment was like that. There were some experiences where apparently the language problem surfaced and there was a refitting of the regiment.

DePue: Refitting as in a lot of exchange of personnel so it didn't retain its Puerto Rican composition?

Mills: Yeah, I think that is a very good statement of how it came about. I saw nothing of that problem. And that was earlier in the war before I got there, where whatever problems arose did arise, but they were corrected apparently, because 65th was a swell unit. I got along just great and very well with everybody.

DePue: Did they still have some Puerto Ricans in the unit?

Mills: Oh yes, oh yes, they sure did. It was not just a wholesale change at all. It was just like a progressive interchange.

DePue: Well, of course, every unit in Korea, every Army and Marine unit I think, were on the rotation policy that was based on points and individual replacements, right?

Mills: That's exactly correct.

DePue: So you showed up as an individual replacement.

Mills: Oh, yeah.

DePue: And there were people who had been there for many many months and who left a few months after you got there?

Mills: Oh, absolutely, true. So it was constantly changing, the personnel. But early on they went as a unit as I recall.

DePue: Yeah, well, I know the 3rd Division initially got to Korea at the time that the 10th Corps was evacuating from Hungnam up north, north of Wansan.

Mills: Right, exactly. Over on the east coast.

DePue: They were the rear guard as the Marines evacuated.

Mills: They were. They were indeed.

DePue: So that would have been late 1950. They'd been there for basically two and a half years when you got there then.

Mills: True. The entire division. Yeah, but there were the constant changes. But I think that there was a time when the 65th was having some difficulties and there were some—how do I want to phrase it? They addressed that problem specifically and made a bunch of changes and replacements in to exacerbate, I think, the feeling of true identity with the 65th. But all of that had been taken care of and was in good shape.

DePue: Well, let's get on towards the end, because you're there during the last year of the war. You know what Americans, I think, have lost sight of now –they know practically nothing about the Korean War anyway –but ...

Mills: Almost nothing.

DePue: But it wasn't like things were calming down that last year, was it?

Mills: Oh heavens, no. No, no, no. They were still—the patrol system was going on, and naturally that would be with the static—and it was hill by hill by hill. Some of them were being taken and retaken, all within a matter of hours and days. It was a war of attrition.

DePue: I'm talking a little bit too much here, but I have a question I want to ask. I'm struck…Mills: No you're not, keep me on track.

DePue: That last year especially, but the last two years in general, it's a war of punch and counterpunch and counterpunch. And neither side had the intention of really dramatically moving the other side back and forth. It was a matter of, you go out on patrols at night, punch as hard as you can, you try to seize that hill, you back off again, and maybe you do that deliberately. Did that make sense to you, the way the war was being fought?

Mills: No, no. It didn't seem to. But we knew what we had to do under the circumstances, and that was to get as much intelligence as we possibly could. We were limited by the language. We were limited by the static condition. And there were certain sectors where you just didn't have much activity at all. That is, even those on line didn't have a hell of a lot of activity. And there were several others where there were hot spots, always seemed to be.

DePue: Well, the hot spot in your sector for the 3rd Division while you were there, and this was June of 1953, was Outpost Harry.

Mills: That is correct.

DePue: Was there a major effort by the Chinese to kick out the American companies that were posted up there? This was an outpost that was—I don't know – 3, 400 yards in front of the frontlines?

Mills: Yes.

DePue: And they would send out a company and...

Mills: They would.

DePue: Do you recall any prisoners or any line crossers who you were processing during that timeframe?

Mills: No, I must in all candor say I don't specifically recall. But I knew that this was the hot spot. We all know that. We're far enough up here wherever we are in this north Chorwon area that all of the artillery –you can hear every shot going. The barrages and the artillery were constantly going, at night and during the day of course. Oh yeah, it was.

DePue: I think both the Chinese and the Americans set the wartime record of launching the most number of artillery rounds in either May or June of '53.

Mills: Yes. And on the day of the ceasefire—remember, the ceasefire was signed at ten o'clock in the morning, and it was to go into effect at ten o'clock that night, twelve hours later. in the meantime, between that ten in the morning and ten at night, you never heard so much artillery on both sides going. It was just absolutely deafening. And I understand, and was told by somebody from DIVARTY, from our division artillery, that they lost several guns. Got so hot from firing those ammo piles that they didn't want to lug those or handle those after the ceasefire, and they just shot and shot and shot. And overheated several of the guns.

DePue: So that last day was all that firing primarily just so they didn't have to bring it back?

Mills: Well, I don't know if it was primarily that. But it was certainly a factor. I think, however, that what they really wanted to do was everybody to shoot as much as they possibly could on that very last day just under the wire. It was something that night, because we were back at our CIC detachment compound waiting for that ten o'clock to hit, and we were all checking the watches. And boy, at ten o'clock sharp, I tell you it was dead silence. It was amazing, just amazing! Never forget it, because all day it was nothing but your ears were just pounding from the constant artillery going off!

DePue: That had to have been almost eerie.

Mills: Oh yeah, it really was. It was just amazing.

DePue: Let's talk about a couple of the other things that happened towards the end. You worked with the Belgians and the Greeks.

Mills: Yes I did. I had the 65th and then I also had the Greek battalion and the Belgian battalion. It was primarily liaison with them, because we were now putting in the element of a third language, not just Korean and English, but now we've got both Greek and—. Incidentally, when I went back for the fiftieth anniversary of the ceasefire to Korea, we had a large reception, and I met several of the Greek officers who had come back for that celebration. Saw them at the reception. Two of them we agreed that we had at least seen each other, because—and it was really quite surprising –but I thought in the back of my mind, "Is that really correct?" Because they looked older than I thought I looked. In any event...

DePue: I know that you worked with John S. D. Eisenhower. [son of Dwight D. Eisenhower, famous WWII general, later U. S. President]

Mills: Yes.

DePue: Can you tell us a little bit about that experience?

Mills: Well, I can. John was with the 3rd Division. He came over in, I want to say, early '52. I think that's about right. He came over and was assigned to the 15th Infantry Regiment, which was the same, by the way, same unit his father commanded up in Washington.

DePue: Fort Lewis.

Mills: Yes, at Fort Lewis. So he was with that, the 15th. As I remember, he was assistant ops officer, I think. And then his father, of course, was elected in November of '52. He was ordered from there from battalion level to Division Headquarters by General—was it Ridings? I think it was Eugene Ridings.

DePue: The Division Commander?

Mills: Yes, I think so. And if it isn't, that was the one just before Ridings. But at least the word was out that he didn't expect that the only surviving child and only son of the President-elect of the United States was going to die on his watch. So he brought him back to Headquarters and I believe that he was acting G-2 of the Division. In any event, John was tactically our boss. That is, the Counterintelligence Corps came directly under the G-2 of the Division. And so he was our lineal boss and just a swell guy; just everybody liked John Eisenhower. He was a competent, very competent, professional, but at the same time a very decent person, and just got along with everyone very very well.

DePue: Unassuming?

Mills: Very unassuming, right. But when it came to his job and his responsibility you knew who was in the driver's seat. And was able to do that with a great manner. I'm sitting here looking at two pictures of John Eisenhower. One with all of us in Korea and the other with me. We got together for lunch just a couple of years ago. He drove up to the bridge at Annapolis and I drove from Washington down to Annapolis and crossed the bridge and we met at a restaurant there and had lunch together and had a great time.

DePue: Now at the time you knew him in Korea what was your rank?

Mills: Oh, my rank was just—I'm just enlisted special agent.

DePue: Which was the equivalent of a sergeant E-5?

Mills: Well, either sergeant or corporal.

DePue: And he was a major?

Mills: He was a major, he was a major. And just a hell of a nice guy. Everybody liked him.

DePue: Did you have a lot of direct dealings with him?

Mills: No, not a great deal. Saw him at—oh, Headquarters was also one of my units for CI, and I got up to G-2 fairly frequently, because we were not very far from the Division Headquarters. That is the Counterintelligence Detachment.

DePue: One of the things that you're dealing with obviously, since you're always dealing with the prisoners, with these line changers and all, but I suspect you had strong feelings about the prisoner exchanges. You've mentioned Little Switch already, which happened in April '53. If you can go into a little bit more about that and what your feelings were about that exchange.

Mills: Well, that was the Little Switch, which did not have as many of course as the later one. Limited in number.

DePue: They were injured and the hospital cases?

Mills: Yes exactly, and they were the ones that were in dire straits physically, mentally, medically. That happened in April. Several of our agents from our detachment were assigned to that and did go to that.

DePue: Where did that happen? At Panmunjom?

Mills: I believe it did, that's exactly, yeah, I think it did. And I was not there, but their stories and their experiences there certainly indicated that these were prisoners in dire straits, that they really had a lot of serious wounds, problems, difficulties, and they were handled with kid gloves by our people. They were really taken care of.

And some of them just gaunt-looking cadavers, and they were clearly moved by what they saw. Boy, it's hard to believe. Some of these stories of World War II and the Japanese prisoner of war camps and how they were treated in the Philippines. All one has to do is look at that photo of General Wainwright coming back out of his fourth prisoner of war camp to see what they looked like. It was even worse in parts of the Philippines where they were just—well, some of them were annihilated. It was just horrible.

Well, in any event their descriptions gave that kind of an impression to me, that they looked very very similar to what we all have seen in World War II photos.

DePue: Do you recall? This was I think June 18th, so right at the tail end of the action up at Outpost Harry. But President Syngman Rhee just unilaterally decided to release something like 27,000 North Korean prisoners who had no intention of going back to the north. Just swung the doors open to the prisons and let them walk out. Do you recall that?

Mills: Only vaguely, only vaguely.

DePue: Some of these guys might have been people you had captured and interrogated.

Mills: Well, that's very true, that's very true; just no way of knowing that. But that was a political move on Dr. Rhee's part, and I can't remember exactly what he was attempting to do with that. Clue me in.

DePue: Well, he hated the whole notion of settling the war with a divided country; he wanted to reunite the whole country. He also knew that these people would just melt into Southern Korean society and be embraced by the Korean people. Apparently he felt comfortable they were no security threat at all. Quite the opposite. But from what I've read, at least, it was because he was trying to disrupt the peace talks.

Mills: Yeah. I think that's right.

DePue: And that didn't cause any great concern where you were at?

Mills: No, I can't recall that it did. I can't. I remember generally when it took place because there was a big hubbub and hullabaloo about it. But as far as the specifics, they just don't pop out at me; they really don't. I was with Syngman Rhee twice. We were sharing the responsibility for security at a big review with Dr. Rhee and his wife being there, and also Vice President Nixon and his wife being there. And so we had a big review. And Dr. Rhee looked fairly frail. Didn't look robust, but seemed perfectly normal. I recall specifically that Vice President Nixon would not follow the security rules. The rules were you don't get out of these ribbons and these lines with the troops, that everybody's got to stay back, and so forth. He just barged right through there, shaking hands with every GI that could get near.

DePue: The GIs I'm sure loved that.

Mills: They had a blast. They really did. And here's the VP, here's the one next in line as Commander-in-Chief, and why, of course. But it did turn out to be a pretty good review. General Ridgway was there and General Hickey, our Corps Commander. We had the British major general who commanded the Commonwealth Division. And everybody in between. Interesting. I think that's the only time that I ever saw Ridgway personally.

DePue: Well, he had moved on by the time you got over there.

Mills: Yes, he had moved on, but he was now—at that time wasn't he in FECOM? [Far East Command]

DePue: No, he'd already moved on from there as well.

Mills: That's right. He became—

DePue: Chief of Staff?

Mills: He did, he became Chief of Staff, and as a matter of fact he was back, and that was at the time.

DePue: Okay. I think we're close to two hours today, as you know. So let's finish off with a little bit of discussion about your memories of the ceasefire and then the prisoner exchange. You still have a long time to go in Korea after that, so we'll pick that up with the second session and the rest of your work as well. So the ceasefire: July 27. I guess what I'm curious about is, again the war ended in such a peculiar way. We were used to winning things and now we're settling for a ceasefire, not a peace.

Mills: Or even half a loaf. Yeah, we were, that's true. And of course if you're there you have mixed feelings about it. True, we weren't winning, and we weren't coming away with an unconditional surrender. But at least we were coming away with the knowledge that we have fought the good fight and we have helped stop Communism –which at that time was a big big deal –from taking over a small unprepared country and dividing it in half. At least we had done something that's honorable. And we didn't come to closure with the whole question, but at the same time we stopped them. They didn't go any further. In fact, we ended up at just about the same place we started. So we at least accomplished that. Of course we didn't have any parades when we got home. But then it had become quite an unpopular situation and the American people were tired of the slow progress, because they were used to big victories. They were used to VJ Day and VE Day [Victory Japan and Victory Europe- WWII] and taking Paris and taking Rome and taking Tokyo.

DePue: I didn't ask you. You probably remember VE Day and VJ Day. I wonder if you could compare that feeling with the feeling you had when the armistice was signed.

Mills: Well, the first would be jubilation with both VE and VJ Days, with a sense of tremendous accomplishment. But I think that the ceasefire in July of '53 was really like a relief. You felt relieved that finally our boys aren't going to be dying and

carried home in body bags or going into one of the cemeteries there in Korea, on the Korean Peninsula. It was more of a relief. Now let's get on with our lives, type of thing, rather than jubilation.

DePue: Any memories, anything that sticks with you about the prisoner exchange that happened over the next couple of months?

Mills: There was quite a bit of that going on, and unfortunately I did not get assigned to any of that like my colleagues did. I think the major reason for that was at that time I was handling Headquarters and Signal Battalion and, let's see, what was the other one? Well, main thing was Headquarters. So I didn't get out into the field on that and had to rely upon what my fellow agents would relay and tell me about it. And some of them took pictures and had those. But for the most part the Big Switch went off very smoothly. Of course they didn't have all of the badly wounded and the really tough ones. Those had taken place at Little Switch.

DePue: Well, so much of what's been written about it afterwards is written because of that process where –I guess it was –the Indian soldiers there were screening those who claimed they didn't want to go back for one reason or another in both directions. Was there much talk about that?

Mills: No. Our people didn't really—either from our division or from Corps as I recall – did not make much of a case out of that. Didn't think so. They, I think, came to the conclusion that it was fairly smooth. There are always going to be bumps in the road of course, but I think for the most part.

DePue: Well, we're I think at the point I'd like to go ahead –a natural break here. But I do want to give you the opportunity, if you want to reflect back, on the time you were there while combat was still going on, if there's anything else, any other incidents or reflections you'd like to make.

Mills: I would only add as a commentary that we can be very very proud of our boys. All of our units that I came in contact with did their job and they did it well. They stood tall and did what was necessary and they did it with honor, great deal of character and honor. We have so many that are still there, and it's a shame that it's become known as the Forgotten War, because the sequence and timing of course compares it with World War II. Then finally we've got Vietnam at the other end of the scale, and they're right in the middle. I guess philosophically it's in the middle, between World War II and the Vietnam War, and rightly so, because of the way the characterization and the feeling of the country and all of our political attitudes change. I guess we shouldn't be surprised that we're at that halfway point in between a very popular war and a very unpopular war. So maybe we were the way to grease the slide. I don't know. But all I know is what I saw of them. To have one of your best friends go up in a minefield is not an easy thing to do.

DePue: Are you willing to talk about that any more? Or just leave it at that?

Mills: It was one of our doctors. He went out there to help a GI that had gotten into the minefield and gotten hit. Another one took him in the process. So well –the only thing that I would say –the only time that I used my .45: that was not in anger but to stop a line crosser from swimming across the Imjin River, and my second shot to the side of him turned him around. He came back and we got him. That's the only time.

DePue: Not even a shot fired in anger.

Mills: That's right, that's right.

DePue: Okay. Thank you very much, Judge. This has been a wonderful interview. And I'm looking forward to part two.

Mills: Well, fine, so am I.

END OF FILE ONE

Interview with Richard Mills

VRK-A-L-2008-007.02

Interview # 2: February 5, 2008

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Tuesday, the 5th of February, 2008. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here in the offices of Judge Richard Mills. This is part two of a series about your experiences during the Korean War. Today we'll especially be getting into those years after the Korean War, to include your career as a lawyer and then a judge, and also a little bit on the Vietnam War era. So thank you very much, Judge.

Mills: My pleasure.

DePue: It's an auspicious day to have the interview, since it's Super Tuesday 2008.

Mills: That's right, it is.

DePue: So after today hopefully—maybe—both Republicans and Democrats will know who their Presidential candidates are. But I doubt it, especially on the Democratic side.

Mills: I think you're probably correct.

DePue: Well, we finished off last time. We pretty much had most of the specific questions that I had for you that dealt with the Korean War. What I want to do today was to

ask quite a few more general questions –ask for you to reflect on a few things. Let me just start by asking you this. Did you have any direct experiences in combat while you were there?

Mills: No I did not.

DePue: Okay. Do you have any other...

Mills: Other than being very close to artillery fire, that of course was coming in all the way to battalion level, sometimes to regimental. But a couple of times where we had artillery still coming into the general area I was very close to that. We did not have any direct hits immediately within feet or yards of me. But they were certainly in the area, and we were scurrying around making sure we were covered before they stopped and ours commenced again.

We had minefields, of course, all over the place that had not been totally cleared, many of them. And so we did have a few incidences of mines going off and some personnel injured as a result. But as far as actually being in a hands-on combat role, no, I was never actually doing that. As I told you last time, I fired my .45 only twice and that in the same incident of picking up a line crosser. And it was successful; I got him to turn around. He was swimming in the Imjin, and having a couple .45s go near him in the water turned him around and he came back. Unfortunately he was nothing more than a line crosser. But in any event those were my only direct instances.

DePue: Can you remember any specific incidents, perhaps the first time that you were on the receiving end of incoming?

Mills: Well, of course you could hear these dudes coming in, and everyone within the vicinity instinctively ducked for cover. We all did the same thing. I happened to be at Battalion Headquarters at the time and this was not a regular occurrence, but it was not rare.

DePue: Do you recall what went through your mind that first time?

Mills: Well, it certainly had my attention. I think that everybody reacts almost automatically. You hear this terrific whine and then all of a sudden—and usually you don't even hear the original firing report until after you hear the noise coming in –and then wham. So you get out of the way as quickly as possible and seek cover. But fortunately that happened rarely.

DePue: Did you receive any medals while you were there?

Mills: Yes, I received the Bronze Star for meritorious...

DePue: Service?

Mills: Yes, meritorious service under combat conditions. And let's see.

DePue: Do you recall what the specific citation, what it in general was awarded for?

Mills: No, no, I do not. As a matter of fact, I found out afterwards that normally at that time there were no certificates issued for the recipient of any of the medals. It wasn't until, I believe the Vietnam, that they actually were typing out and having some kind of a reference made. That's the best I know. All I know is that shortly before—I'm trying to remember just what the timeframe was –but Major Frank, the Detachment Commander, pinned the medal on me out in front of our Detachment Headquarters. I don't think that I've ever seen an actual citation other than on the final form, 104? 404?

DePue: DD 214?

Mills: 214. That must have been it.

DePue: Well, you should have orders, as well, awarding...

Mills: Oh yes there were some orders, but I don't think there was a citation of anything in particular that was done.

DePue: Did you receive that obviously while you were still in Korea but...

Mills: Oh yes.

DePue: After the war itself?

Mills: Yes, after the war, after the ceasefire.

DePue: Okay, so this included some of your experiences in service after the ceasefire as well.

Mills: That is correct, that is correct. While I was with the 3rd Infantry CIC Detachment, we also earned both the Presidential Unit Citation from Korea and from the United States President. So we had two unit citations, and both of them were awarded while I was with the unit, so consequently I'm entitled to wear those.

DePue: What would you consider the toughest part for you personally about being in Korea?

Mills: Well, I think whatever apprehension we have individually concerning our own safety without feeling like you were in imminent danger, but only almost in a—what word do I want for the sense of it? Not one of urgency, but one of realistic possibility. And that's about all that I can really say. I must say that I was very careful when we got near any of the minefields that we had. After the hostilities, of course you wondered if it was ever going to start again and if that possibility was around. I think all of us talked in general in those kind of terms. But, as I said earlier, we were not supposed to go beyond battalion level. That was the lowest that we were supposed to be going. I guess in reality that probably was a good thing

because we were aware of plenty of training and plenty of policy that I'm sure that the enemy could have utilized. This was an emphasis, by the way, that we got at the 441st, which was FECOM Detachment for CIC in Tokyo. They were very concerned about the safety of all Counterintelligence Corps agents and personnel.

DePue: Height of the Cold War, terribly embarrassing if one of you fell into Communist hands and disappeared.

Mills: I would think so.

DePue: How did the nature of your duties and responsibilities change after the ceasefire?

Mills: Well, there was, of course, a good deal of relief. And once that took place things tended to get into a more routine schedule. We of course made all the rounds of our various units.

DePue: So were there still line crossers?

Mills: Oh, absolutely. Oh yes, we had a lot of line crossers. And everybody wanted to get down to South Korea.

DePue: Did the nature of the line crossers change after the ceasefire?

Mills: Yes. You saw a great deal many more females coming than we had before. It was almost exclusively males who were trying to get across the line for whatever reason they were coming, and there were very few really, women, and those that we did have before the cessation of hostilities were clearly farming type women. They were merely trying to get food and assist their families and so forth. So we had very, very little problem with females before. But once the ceasefire hit then it was like a floodgate, and boy, they were coming in like gangbusters.

DePue: A lot of them have children with them?

Mills: Oh yes.

DePue: Families?

Mills: Oh yes you'd have—absolutely, be just like refugees coming in. And this really became –a bulk of our work was to sift through and take these people, interrogate them, get the best knowledge we could. And frankly many of them were simply coming in for finding employment, work, to farm again and so forth. And so we had a great deal of work then to do with the CA, the Civil Affairs, and their compounds in the sifting process. In fact we had one agent who did nothing but go every week down to Seoul and screen indigenous personnel for work for the 3rd Division. I'm talking about houseboys, possible interpreters, those working in the kitchens, in the messes, even the motor pool, all of these people.

DePue: Were there some that were coming across who were very suspicious?

Mills: There were.

DePue: And what happened to them?

Mills: Well, most of them didn't get the jobs. Most of them ended up with the South Korean Army, ROK, the ROK CIC. And then we never heard from them.

DePue: Did the ROKs have some prisons for these line crossers after the war then?

Mills: Well, I don't know if you'd call them prisons. They were certainly compounds that they maintained. We didn't see too many of them though. Most of them went further into the interior.

DePue: And do you know what kind of things the South Koreans would have been doing with these people?

Mills: Well, I suspect, and we have reason to believe, that some of it was physical. And there were methods used that I would say probably would pale in comparison—or the current fiasco concerning waterboarding would pale in comparison to what happened to some of those who were not being truthful and honest with the South Koreans.

DePue: So they were being tortured you suspect.

Mills: I suspect that there was some degree.

DePue: Now apparently you didn't witness any of that.

Mills: No, no, but I witnessed some pretty tough handling, let's say; all of us did.

DePue: From a distance? Or were you in the room when some of these things happened?

Mills: Oh no, no, no, we were normally not in the room, no. Now I'm not speaking for every single American, but certainly I was never in the direct room where any of that took place, but I've seen the results of it.

DePue: Now some of those people that the South Koreans were suspicious of, would they have been returned back to the north?

Mills: Were they, you say?

DePue: Yes.

Mills: I simply can't answer that. I don't know. I would doubt it.

DePue: Here's my assumption. That if they are very suspicious, they've tortured these people or whatever term you want to use. Those aren't necessarily the people you want to release into the general society either.

Mills: No, no, that's very true. But certainly what has happened to them I really have no direct knowledge. Just...

DePue: Fair to say from your observations that both the North and South Koreans played by different rules than the UN forces did?

Mills: I would have to say yes, I would think so. It's so hard for anyone who hasn't been in the Far East to realize that life means no more than a bowl of rice to some elements of the populations there. And this is understandable, with the history of what has taken place, and the amount of humanity that is involved and how many people, and the population explosions, and the necessity to go to all lengths to get food to survive. This is not really a surprising situation. But it's very difficult, I think, for those of us in the western world to accept it.

DePue: Do you know of any South Koreans who were voluntarily going north at the same time?

Mills: No, no, I absolutely don't recall a single one of those. I recall many coming from the north to the south and of course this has been going on for a long period of time, ever since the end of World War II.

DePue: How about Chinese or other ethnic groups coming south? Were they almost exclusively Korean by that time?

Mills: Yes, they were, yeah. We ran into only two Chinese. But don't forget, this was in the last campaign of the war, and we had been going for twenty months plus in the static DMZ 38th parallel configuration. By this time the Chinese had all either been—all the POWs had been captured and were still in detainment and nobody else was there. This was primarily North Korean now. Because they started with the North Koreans. Then the Chinese came in. Then we went into the static timeframe. During that time many of the Chinese had been pulled back, and their units had left and been replaced by North Korean again. So it was a flip-flop. Not totally so, but...

DePue: Of course the war ended with that prisoner exchange, and tens of thousands of Chinese POWs in the south decided to stay in the south.

Mills: They did.

DePue: This is probably a question of the obvious here, but I do want to get your impressions. Why were the North Koreans interested in going south and not vice versa?

Mills: I can only assume because of the terrible conditions in the north and that the philosophy of the dictator—Kim Il Sung?

DePue: Kim Il Sung.

Mills: –were such that the deprivations were terrible. That's continued over all these years. It's still true fifty years later.

DePue: Except it's even more true fifty...

Mills: More true, that's true, exactly.

DePue: So describe the economy of the south. You just discussed that the economy of the south: conditions in the south were much better than the north. So what was the economy like at that time? What were living conditions like?

Mills: Well, they were still very primitive compared to our yardstick of comparison. But they were still far superior to what the north was used to.

DePue: Was a lot of the farming subsistence level farming?

Mills: Yes, yes it was. I'm trying to remember specifically. There were still areas of Seoul, for instance, that were still in the same condition that they were at the time of the Incheon landing. They were thrown together and there were hovels and it was tough. It was tough. But it was subsistence. They were making progress. During the time when I was there, which was during that static period, during those not quite two years, twenty months, twenty-two months, the southern portion of all of South Korea was certainly building back. They were expanding the farming and they had schools and everything was beginning to work again; they were being quite successful at it. And by the time I left, tremendous strides had been made. Now not in Seoul as far as buildings are concerned.

DePue: Well, Seoul had been a city fought over, fought through, four times.

Mills: That's right, absolutely, absolutely. Just went back and forth, back and forth. Of course once Incheon took place and they went through there, holy mackerel, the place was shot up very badly. There were only four or five permanent style European western type buildings in the entire city. You had the railroad station, you had the Bank of Korea, there were a couple of department store types, one in which, of course, the US put its military PX in there. So you ended up with there were very very few buildings left.

DePue: So then how would you describe the South Korean people? I'm especially interested in their attitudes, how they responded after the ceasefire.

Mills: Well, I think that first of all they were universally grateful to the western powers, the sixteen nations, primarily America, primarily the United States, but the sixteen nations that had sent troops and units to the UN. They were very grateful to all of those countries. That remained true the entire time that I was there, and I think that it was even enhanced by the time I was gone. So that within a year after the ceasefire it seemed to me that they were deeply grateful for everything that we had done.

By this time they had assimilated so many of our western thoughts and ideas. And particularly those things that they could put their hands on such as material and the things that America brought in by way of clothes and food.

DePue: Were the men already wearing western business suits by the time you left?

Mills: No, oh, no, no, no. We had very, very little of that, very, very little. Everyone was still wearing dungarees and olive drab and...

DePue: Traditional Korean outfits?

Mills: Oh, you had very little. You didn't see too much of it. It wasn't out except a few old papa-sans who were of the old school and wore the traditional white with the tall hats. Very colorful of course. And then the ladies were coming back with their beautiful costumes and gorgeous colors within a period of—I don't know –months. I think they were all waiting to make sure that the ceasefire was going to remain in place.

And there was a good deal –for about six months I would say –if well, let's be sure, let's be sure that it's going to continue before we really get back into rebuilding and so forth.

DePue: How would you describe the typical personality of Koreans?

Mills: I would say very definitely a very calm and very friendly attitude. I'm talking about to the American personnel. They seemed to be deeply grateful for everything. I know that that is not true today and I have noticed in my journeys back to Korea that each time it seemed that there was less of gratitude displayed, or at least enunciated, each time that I've gone back by the younger people. Now the older generation, I don't think they will ever cease being deeply appreciative and grateful for what the western countries did for them.

DePue: Let's shift gears here a little bit and talk about some perceptions you have about the American military at the time. I want to start with your reflections on the experiment, if you will, with integration, incorporating blacks into the units. Of course you came into the military. You knew nothing but that. But what were your impressions? How was that working?

Mills: Well, I think it was working pretty well. There were some isolated instances where it wasn't going too smoothly. But on the most part I would say that it did. I can't think of any adverse or negative, while we're in our units and while we're on line, anything of that nature. Are you meaning with the Korean people?

DePue: No, among the military themselves.

Mills: Oh no, no, no, I don't think we had much difficulty in that sense at all. In fact one of the battalion S-2s was a very good friend of mine and he was a black lieutenant

and did a bang-up job, just was outstanding. Of course we had almost total integration everyplace that I can think of.

DePue: Well, you alluded to it. Did the Koreans treat the black soldiers differently?

Mills: I don't know that they treated them any differently. I think that maybe they were somewhat apprehensive in dealing on a day-to-day basis with some of them. It's very hard to put your finger on it and articulate this kind of a—because after all we had integrated by the then-Commander-in-Chief President Truman's edicts at the end of World War II. And so this was—we're just five years later getting into this. And so there were growing pains I think. But they dissipated out pretty quickly. Certainly as far as the units were concerned, I don't recall anything of any real, real significance. I just don't.

DePue: You were a young enlisted man during this period. Your impression of the American NCOs [non-commissioned officers] and American officers you served with?

Mills: I thought all of very high grade. Of course I was wearing US's. In fact all Counterintelligence Corps agents, whether commissioned or enlisted, were required to wear US. So you had two US's on your collars.

DePue: Rather than rank.

Mills: Yes, exactly correct, yes. And then you also had a US on whichever headgear you're using. In the winter, of course it was the ear muffs and in the dead center you'd have a US, gold US.

DePue: Well, why was that?

Mills: Well, that's just so that wherever we were and wherever we served we did not have to worry about what rank you were or the rank of the person that you were dealing with in whatever capacity, and it worked out very, very well. As a matter of fact, we all had field grade privileges. We went to the officers clubs. We were the same thing as a major.

DePue: Well, I'm still curious what the rationale is.

Mills: Well, the rationale is, number one, that you're not designated by rank so there isn't a stair step hierarchy like there is in the rest of the military. Consequently you could do your work, make your interrogations all in anonymity.

DePue: But you're interrogating Korean civilians generally; you're not interrogating military, are you?

Mills: Well in one case—we had certain obligations to do even within the military. For instance, we had an enlisted man who was a conscientious objector. How he had gotten in through the system we don't know. He was actually at 3rd Division

Headquarters. He refused to salute the flag, and consequently I was assigned to go in there and to investigate along with the G-2. It ended up that he was court-martialed and so I had to help get the input and the investigation and the inquiries to furnish to JAG, [Judge Advocate General] which I did do
. So we had an occasional situation like that or similar to it that took us out of the regular routine of line crossers and all of that.

DePue: The morale in your unit? This is after the war. Did the morale start to deteriorate a little bit because you were stuck there?

Mills: Oh no. No, no, we all knew from the head end what our obligations were going to be, and how the turnover would take place. We'd be replaced and the replacements would come in the same way I came in.

DePue: Talk a little bit about that then. How did that work for you? A point system?

Mills: Yes. It was more on a time basis. Let's see, I was there a total of fourteen months. The normal was between thirteen and fifteen months, I would say, from what I can recall. Now you've got to remember too that we have a composite Counterintelligence Corps unit that some of them are RAs, some of them are career commission...

DePue: RAs meaning regular Army.

Mills: Regular Army, right. In fact, this was interesting. For a twenty-three-year-old who's basically just out of college, and I was flying over –we flew Flying Tiger from San Francisco to Tokyo –two of my group were master sergeants. They were Counterintelligence Corps agents, but they had been majors during World War II and had been battalion commanders in the Pacific. Of course they had been Regular Army enlisted, and during the war had gone through OCS and gotten commissioned, and then by the time the war is over and all the cutbacks, they reverted back into enlisted status. Here they were with the top six stripes, and that's what they were when they went back to Korea. We had a number of those.

In fact, Pop Hyde was a master sergeant; he was in our detachment, and he had been an RA for many years. He was getting close to retirement age. We just had a number of those. And the officers were all—we had a detachment commander, we had operations officer, we had administrative officer, and three or four others. And they were all career people. In counterintelligence, once they got into that, it tended that they continued in CIC work for their entire careers. And most of them ending up lieutenant colonels when they—and many of them of course then after Korea was finished went back, another course or two at the CIC School at Fort Holabird, and then they're off to Germany. Many of them stayed their entire rest of their career in Germany with maybe a one-year tour back here in the States, and then back to Germany again.

DePue: I'd say those guys deserved their retirement pay by the time they got there then.

Mills: I think so, yeah, they sure do. But it was really a protection for us in doing our jobs without having to worry about being outranked at some place along the line; they had found this out by trial and error, apparently within the Corps. This was just the MO for operating overseas. And you see those that were assigned back here in the States never wore a uniform. Every Army command had a bunch of detachments of counterintelligence within their area. For instance the 5th was out of Chicago and Saint Louis—it moved to Saint Louis and so forth. But in that 5th Army unit, they had detachments in Chicago and in Milwaukee and just around wherever. They were doing background checks, investigated, the same thing the FBI does all the time. They were doing it for military personnel, but they wore civilian clothes and there was no uniform and no rank. And so this worked out very well. And I just fell into it, and I found it fascinating, because it was extremely interesting. Really, really was.

DePue: Learn a lot about people doing that.

Mills: Oh boy, I'll say. Yeah, people 101; it was a doozy.

DePue: Well, let's back up just a little bit. The ceasefire is signed July 27. Shortly thereafter then the 3rd Division moved west and basically moved towards the Imjin River?

Mills: Yes, yes, that is correct.

DePue: Some of the American units started rotating back?

Mills: They did. They did indeed. At least the majority of the personnel did. I don't know that they rotated back as units so much at that time.

DePue: There were what? Five or six American divisions there—or UN divisions? I can't imagine they kept all of them there for a full year.

Mills: No. Well, I think that most of them stayed just about a year before they were moved back.

DePue: To make sure that the ceasefire stuck?

Mills: Yeah, because really that was the—just think of the amount of time. This was the longest in the history of man that we're aware of that they had negotiated, for two years, almost two years, in trying to arrive at a peace settlement. They had meeting after meeting after meeting with all of the—and I can't remember how many times our chief of the mission was actually changed. We went through several generals and admirals. We had Turner Joy there. General Garrison. Oh, we had at least two admirals and at least three generals that were replaced in that whole period of time that they were having these peace negotiations.

DePue: Once you do get the ceasefire, you've still got a sizable American force there. Were a lot of the Americans now working on helping the South Koreans reconstruct their country?

Mills: Well, I was up at the top at the DMZ, and I don't remember that I had any direct knowledge other than what I understood was going on in the balance of the country to the south. I understand that many schools, orphanages and civic-type community structures were all being helped by American military personnel, both officially and voluntarily. And the Air Force in particular I know, because I've chatted with several of the people involved, and they were doing quite a bit of extra work for orphanages and this type of thing back in the southern part of the country.

DePue: Did your unit that you know of? Did they adopt an orphanage? So many of them did.

Mills: Yes. No, no. I'm almost confident, and I can't tell you if any of the units of the Division did, but I don't recall any. We were up there on line, and I think that most of this is taking place around or south of Seoul, which would have been all the way into the peninsula.

DePue: My impression from what you're talking about, in your particular job you kept just as busy after the ceasefire as you were before.

Mills: Oh we sure did. Oh absolutely. Most of it was through the civilian affairs arena where we had to make sure that we weren't hiring people that we didn't want anywhere near the frontline.

DePue: Well, maybe you weren't close enough to see this, but what kind of a gauntlet did these people have to face to get south? Because I'm sure the North Korean Army wasn't letting them through.

Mills: You mean physical? Oh, letting them through. Oh, absolutely not. No, these were people who really were lucky in getting there. I know we had several that I remember getting this from some of my friends at 10th Corps. And these were crossers who had gone several times. It was clear that they were messenger type individuals. And you mentioned last time about the POWs down there at what island was that?

DePue: Koje-do.

Mills: Koje-do. They had a regular intelligence operation within the prisoners within the prisoners within the prisoners. And the POWs. Anyway I got strictly second and third hand from Corps that several of these types, that they were known or suspected of being couriers back and forth, that found themselves able to get across the line one way, get work done, and come back with information and orders and so forth. At least that's what the suspicions were. Usually when things like this did come up and there was a possibility of them, they were passed on to Corps. And then Corps sifted through. And if they figured that they had something of solid leads then they went up another step and they went to 8th Army at Seoul.

DePue: Let's talk about a few questions here more general in nature. How were you able to keep in touch with your family and your girlfriend back in the States?

Mills: Why, good old mail. In the right-hand corner you just printed free, f-r-e-e, and that was always fun. I must tell you this, that when I was there, of course we were in the stable part of the war, and the mail was outstanding. It was really excellent. And I...

DePue: Was it shipped over or flown over?

Mills: Beg your pardon.

DePue: Shipped or flown over?

Mills: I believe flown, but I'm not absolutely certain of that. As far as the letters are concerned I think that they were flown. I know that any packages, most of them came a lot later. But one thing I did notice in particular was, I took a newspaper from back home. I think it was given to me as a Christmas present or something, and I got that paper all the time. It was just rolled up with a sticker around it with my address on it. I had that newspaper never more than a week late, which was really something in those days. We're not talking about computers and instant communication fifty years ago.

DePue: How often did you get letters from this girlfriend in Oklahoma?

Mills: Oh, I got about every other—about every week I would get a couple, which was awfully good.

DePue: And you were writing her just as often?

Mills: Yes. Yeah, I was.

DePue: At the time what were your intentions?

Mills: Well, they were very interested. And I think vice versa. But as time goes by and as distance seems to get longer and longer, it's just one of those things that eventually we went our separate ways.

DePue: So the relationship cooled a little bit while you were in Korea?

Mills: Yes to a certain degree that's right, it did. And I think it's probably perfectly natural. It wasn't… No dear Johns or anything of that nature, but it was still something that has to be tough on any relationship, that absence doesn't always make the heart grow fonder.

DePue: How about the food? Were you eating three hots a day?

Mills: Oh yes, oh yeah, food was fine. There wasn't any problem at all. Occasionally when we were out in the field or out with units sometimes we'd have to go to the C rations or something. But that was a very rare thing. They did everything they possibly could. Holidays in particular were big things with the food service, and they did a marvelous job in turkeys and all that stuff.

DePue: Have Korean KPs working in the mess hall?

Mills: Oh yes, oh my, yes. KPs, cooks. Our motor pool of our detachment was actually run by a ROK [Republic of Korea] sergeant. And all of the mechanics, everybody that handled any of the—they were all Korean.

DePue: This had to be just about the best kind of job you could get if you were a South Korean at the time.

Mills: Oh, it was absolutely wonderful. They vied for it like you can't believe. Oh and the interpreters were all very good. And it was amazing. English is now the language of the world. It has replaced French, anything. We can travel today and never worry a bit about being understood.

DePue: Did you have problems that you had so many Koreans who kept trying to get to the Americans, hanging around the mess hall, things like that, that you had problems keeping them away?

Mills: Oh no, no, no, we didn't have any difficulty in keeping them away. They couldn't even get up the MSR [Main Supply Route] without having to go through MP [Military Police] checks. And the closer you got to the units that were up at the thirty-eighth [map parallel], the security just got tighter and tighter and tighter. So you didn't see much at all. Whoever you saw out on a road was usually a line crosser, if they were all by themselves, or maybe two, unless they were obviously a farmer. And we had a lot of those. But the Koreans that were hired by the Americans knew how to handle this. They traveled in groups. They were all with hand-me-down dungarees and olive drabs and so forth. And they've got their papers. And they know that they don't just get out and run loose. They're very careful about that. But of course we've screened all these people in giving them employment and it's the best thing in the world for them. They got a lot of tote, stuff that they can get...

DePue: So they're very motivated to be playing by the rules.

Mills: Exactly.

DePue: How about, did you have leave while you were there, R&R?

Mills: Yes, I had a couple of them, right. I had one to Kobe, to the port of Kobe, Japan, and the other to Tokyo. And of course I had come into Tokyo and had spent two weeks there on my journey to Korea. So I had already had a sampling of Tokyo. In Kobe, where I specifically requested, because I had a cousin who was an officer with the Transportation Corps in the port, and he and his wife were there with their children, and so I wanted to spend it there, and I did. Took a couple days, went to Kyoto from Kobe, and that was wonderful. Kyoto was a lovely place, historical and cultural center of Japan, and it was wonderful. Got some cloisonné works there and went through a cloisonné factory, and it was fascinating to see how they did it. And sent my mother a gorgeous crystal cloisonné vase. Beautiful stuff.

DePue: Can you describe real quickly what the cloisonné is? Because I've got this image in my own mind, but I'm not sure everybody knows what it is.

Mills: Cloisonné. They begin with a brass shell and the brass shell—I don't mean artillery shell. But it's melted and it's say in a vase, in the shape of a vase. Then they take the black ink and make the sketch on the outside of that brass, and then they take either silver or copper wire and melt it to the design that's been sketched onto that brass. Then that's raised a bit, and so then they take various colored glasses, and it's melted and dropped within those designs, and then it is dried and set, and then they go through a polishing process that takes many, many times and that is all broken down, that's all shined down, and then they pour acid into the vase and it eats out the brass. And what you are left with is this gorgeous cloisonné opaque and stunningly colored beautiful piece of work. And they're very valuable. They're just wonderfully intricate and beautiful stuff.

DePue: Do you recall any times when they had entertainers, American entertainers, USO shows come over?

Mills: Yes, we had a couple of them. And I can't remember really who was there at the time. I know that Bob Hope was at one of them. And who was the other? Well, I don't think one as well-known as Bob Hope. But we had them in Korea all the time. They were coming over. But they were going to big bases here and there and so forth, and we're really stretched out up there. So only two times do I recall that in our vicinity that was even remotely accessible to us could we get there. But they were at large bases all the time.

DePue: Okay. Anything else you'd like to tell me about your experience while you were stationed in Korea?

Mills: Well, I must tell you that I enjoyed it. After the ceasefire and after the concern for safety and so forth were there, it settled into a pretty decent routine for most of us. I think even so for those right on the DMZ right up at the very front line. I think there was always the question whether or not the ceasefire was going to last and whether it is indeed permanent, because we kept going and there was never any peace agreement signed, only the ceasefire. Well, none today even. So here we are in the same position, legally I guess, as we were back then.

DePue: I think they still go through the motions of having meetings to address the peace.

Mills: I think so. They do. And Panmunjom by the way has vastly changed with that Freedom Village and everything that is there. So those little Quonset huts that they had originally are still there, but so is the Freedom—they've got a huge hall. Freedom Hall, isn't that what it's called?

DePue: I'm not sure.

Mills: It was built just a few years ago.

DePue: That the North Koreans built?

Mills: No.

DePue: South Koreans.

Mills: South Koreans built, yeah. No, the North Koreans didn't build anything except to mimic us from their side of the line.

DePue: I thought Freedom Village was a North Korean village though.

Mills: Well, you're talking about—yes, you're talking about the phony one, the fake one.

DePue: The fake one with the bullhorns and the music playing.

Mills: Facades, yeah, they still have that. That's still there.

DePue: Any particularly humorous events that happened while you were there?

Mills: Gosh. Well, after the ceasefire we did a lot of playing of a lot of volleyball. We had some pretty good volleyball players in our detachment. It so happened that Major General Charles D. W. Canham came to be the CG –but he came after the ceasefire –of the Division, 3rd Division. General Canham was wiry, absolutely like a stick, real gaunt, had a mustache. He was not a very tall man, but he certainly commanded respect. He had been a regimental commander in Europe during WWII, and then had been promoted to brigadier general and was made ADC of the 45th I want to say Division. And so he was Assistant Division Commander there, and then got to Korea as a major general. He was a stickler, but he loved volleyball. He would come out and put a chair right at the net and he'd sit there and he would critique everybody out there. It was really quite comical to see this fellow who had a couple of Silver Stars and quite a combat record in Europe sitting there having a great time watching the volleyball.

DePue: Well, speaking of generals makes me curious. What was the opinion that you and your buddies had about a couple of the generals who were more prominent? Let's start with MacArthur.

Mills: Well, I think that most everybody had the feeling that General MacArthur had outlived his time, that he should have stayed in retirement years before. Or at least when the war was over he should have reverted to his retirement. Of course that's where he was in the Philippines when the war broke out. He was retired from the United States Army and he was a field marshal in the Philippine Army.

DePue: 1941.

Mills: That's right. But as far as his being the American Caesar of Tokyo, I think that most of us felt that he'd really had his time, and it was time to move on, and somebody

with more vigor and younger needed to be there. Of course, that's what President Truman made possible.

DePue: Of course he was gone before you got there.

Mills: Oh absolutely. He was gone in '51 in what, April, something like that of '51?

DePue: April. But my impression is that the Korean people venerated him just as the Japanese did.

Mills: Oh absolutely. That's absolutely correct; they sure did. Because remember, at Incheon as soon as they had taken Seoul, he was there immediately to reinstate Dr. Syngman Rhee as the president of South Korea and give him back his country, just as though he said, "I will return," to the Philippines and all this theatrical business. Not to say that—I don't denigrate that at all, because there are times when you have to have it, when we need it as a nation, as a movement. We need symbols. Oliver Wendell Holmes once said that in this country we live by symbols –our flag and everything that there is –we live by symbols. And we need them. But there's a time when you move on and I think most of us felt that General MacArthur's time had come. We were very very impressed with Ridgway and with Maxwell Taylor. We didn't see much of Mark Clark. He was in Tokyo as FECOM, as Far East Command Commander. So we didn't really see much of Clark. But Ridgway and Maxwell Taylor and Van Fleet were considered, I think, top-drawer, and we all associated ourselves with them. I think that Ridgway, of course as we remarked last time, was the savior of the UN forces in Korea.

DePue: I'd like to have you discuss a little bit about what it was like coming back home, and as much as you can about the actual reunion with your family.

Mills: Oh. Well, it was great to see them.

DePue: This was August of '54 now?

Mills: Yes, this was August of '54. When I got off the plane my mother and father and one of my brothers were there.

DePue: There being?

Mills: Springfield, Illinois. When I got off the Ozark [Airlines] flight right in here at the airport. So it was wonderful to see them again. But being away has never been a problem for me. I know that a lot—met a lot –that were terribly homesick during service, almost to the point of making them so depressed that they had difficulties. But I've never had that because I spent almost all of my summers off at Boy Scout camps and canoe bases and in the mountains of New Mexico. I'm camp director, I'm on staff, and I'm gone the entire time. It just never really bothered me that much as long as… My mother had been a secretary to a bank president and she could take shorthand like nobody's business and type, very speedy typist. What she always did was to use a Royal upright at home that we had and she would get

carbon papers and she would type to all three of her boys the same basic letter all the way through.You took your turn getting the original and the first carbon and the third, this way. And then it was always personal handwriting "Dear Dick" up at the top, all this typed letter and body, and then "Love, Mother and Dad." And that's the way it was. Then there was always space on that last page for a personal additional note just to you. Your brothers didn't see this. The same thing with them. I didn't see what she wrote to each of them. But this was the way it was, every week like clockwork. This was all during my camps and summers and everything, wherever we were. This was just the...

DePue: So not just in Korea, but out in Boy Scout camp or wherever you were.

Mills: Sure, sure, and college.

DePue: Did you keep all those letters?

Mills: No, I must say that I did not, and I'm sorry that I didn't. From that standpoint I'm sorry, but you're not thinking about that. And besides most of the letters are mundane routine garden variety everyday stuff that you'd just chat about at home if you were home. And so it didn't really—there wasn't anything really memorable about it.

DePue: How about the letters from the girlfriends?

Mills: Well, now I can't remember whether I saved all those. I think that I did, but something happened in the interim when you get back and you're unpacking and you're taking, you sift through everything, and...

DePue: Well, maybe your wife was sifting later.

Mills: Well, that's true too.

DePue: Didn't want to jump to any conclusions there. Was your mother or anybody saving your letters?

Mills: I wouldn't be surprised. I just wouldn't be surprised, because she was a saver. I always think of her recipe drawer. When I say drawer, I mean a good size drawer just full of loose recipes. How she ever found anything I do not know. But she saved so much. But I think that over the years when they sold their house, moved to an apartment, someplace at that juncture, everything was sifted out, and that which was not really needed was pitched. I think that's it.

DePue: So you come back in August of 1954. You have pretty much done your service to the United States Army, have you not?

Mills: I have for the interim until there's another conflict, I guess.

DePue: What were your intentions as far as the military was concerned when you came back?

Mills: Well, my intentions were that I was going to stay in the inactive Reserve and...

DePue: Of course you really had no choice, you had to be...

Mills: No, that's absolutely true, because you were in it, and you were going to stay in it for what, a total of six, I think it was.

DePue: Yeah, six or eight years depending on when you enlisted. I can't tell you for that timeframe.

Mills: Yeah, well, I can't either. But if you enlisted you were in for a couple more years than you were if you were drafted. I think that that was a six-year commitment, two of which were active duty, and then you've got four more to go. But I had in my mind that at some juncture I probably would be doing something about getting a commission. The reason for that was that during the time I was in Korea and on active duty I even had gone to the point of filling out application for a direct commission in intelligence while I was there. You had to have one year of active duty and then you would be committed for another three years if you got a direct commission.

I had it all prepared and all ready to go, and then I gave it quite a bit of thought, and decided that my ultimate goal of course was the law, and I wanted to continue on that. That would be another three-year commitment that I would have in addition to what I'd already been doing, and that would put me back a little further than I thought it would be productive to do. So I finally decided not to submit the paperwork and get the commission at that time. I came back, finished law school, and all of this time I was thinking in terms of possibly JAG. [Judge Advocate General]

DePue: Where did you go to law school?

Mills: To Mercer University.

DePue: In Georgia?

Mills: That's right, Macon, Georgia.

DePue: Now you had finished your college degree when you...

Mills: Yes. And oh, I had a great time in law school and enjoyed it very much. I made law review and graduated fourth in the class. But I was not intending to stay down there. I had two opportunities to be just like my two law clerks in here: to be a law clerk to a couple of federal judges, one in Georgia and one in Alaskan Territory as a matter of fact. But I decided against that. I was going to ultimately come to Illinois I knew. Family and everything. So I decided not to do that. I came back here and took the

bar. While I was taking the bar examination review I was a trust and bank examiner for the state of Illinois, and I did that for about nine months. I'd done it in the summer too, beforehand. Each summer I had done that. It was good experience. So I was in Chicago taking the bar review course and also acting as a trust and bank examiner; then I took the bar, passed the bar, got sworn in, and it was time to come back. So I came back with my uncle in my grandfather's old law office, and started to practice law in Virginia, [Illinois] which is the county seat of Cass County. So here I am in the county seat of rural America.

DePue: Well, let's back up just a little bit. Now maybe you answered this question the first go-round, but I can't recall that you did. Why Mercer? Why Georgia?

Mills: Well, I tell you. I had gone to Illinois College, which was a great small...

DePue: Which is just a couple blocks away, from what you said.

Mills: Oh, that's right, absolutely. In the hometown of Jacksonville. And I was looking really to a smaller law school and one that still had a fine reputation. The American Bar Association had a list of law schools, by categories of small and large and so forth. They gave a great recommendation to Mercer, and I got into a nice writing correspondence with the Dean of the Law School, F. Hodge O'Neal, and went down there, liked what I saw, and so I stayed. I finished out law school down there and had a...

DePue: What was his first name?

Mills: F. Hodge, H-o-d-g-e, O'Neal.

DePue: Okay, sorry about that.

Mills: Yeah, that's quite all right. Incidentally, Hodge, later on in years, was the Dean of Washington University Law School down here in Saint Louis. One of his best friends on the faculty at Mercer was one of my profs, Dr. Wilson. One summer when I'm on the Appellate Court –this was many years later, on the Appellate Court here in Illinois—or had I gone to the district? Maybe I'd already come to the district, and he was down there and Dr. Wilson was doing a sabbatical, a visiting professorship at Washington under O'Neal. So I drove down and the three of us went to the University Club, had lunch together and had a wonderful time remembering days long gone. So great fun. But I had a great time at Mercer and enjoyed it thoroughly.

DePue: You graduated in what year?

Mills: 1957.

DePue: Did the GI Bill help with your education?

Mills: Oh, did it help. Boy, I'll tell you, it was wonderful. That was just terrific. That GI Bill was the greatest thing that ever came out of World War II. It was just terrific. We've continued it of course, and it's even become better and better –the the numbers of people who have gone to higher education, gotten college degrees, that they never would have had a chance to do before, never. I come from the Depression kid era, and I tell you, people, if they didn't have—a high school diploma was equal to a bachelor's degree from college. That's how education was in those days. And now World War II opened up a panacea of tremendous growth in our country in giving the GI Bill to all these grunts and guys that went through so much. Boy, it was just wonderful! And I'll tell you, I was the beneficiary of it in an indirect way, because when I was in college all the GIs were coming back, and so they're now enlisting under the GI Bill in college, and they're coming in, and they're in my classes. I'm just an eighteen-, nineteen-year-old kid out of high school, and here are these twenty-four-, twenty-five-year-olds, some of them with families and kids and obligations. All of them with maturity far beyond me are setting the standards in the classroom for all of the rest of us. And it really raised—it raised the stick. So you really had to hustle, and it was a great experience.

DePue: So it wasn't like a kid going to school today and deciding it's time to party and get away from the parents? It was serious business for those folks?

Mills: It was serious. Down and dirty. You bet. They were tough and they set the goals. So I've always considered that I got as fine of an education as anybody could get just because of the timing and the GI Bill and all the boys coming home. And very few girls, but they were there.

DePue: In '57, then you came up to Illinois, took the bar exam in Illinois shortly thereafter.

Mills: That's exactly right.

DePue: What I'd like to have you do is just talk a little bit and bring us up to speed to about the mid-sixties in your legal career. Then we'll shift gears and talk about getting back into the military.

Mills: Okay, fine. Well, 1957. I was sworn in in May of 1957. On the 1st of July I left the state employment as a trust examiner and began the practice of law in my family's law office in Virginia, Illinois, and with my uncle Epler, who had been a first lieutenant in the Army, World War I, and served, I think, all of his career at Fort Sam Houston. In fact he was there at the same time that Dwight Eisenhower was at Fort Sam, and they both had their first child there at Fort Sam. My aunt remembers many times bringing Jane out in a baby carriage and meeting Mamie Eisenhower and her little son. That son was the one that died –that was Icky –which Eisenhower has always said was the worst day of his life. Anyway, Epler of course was practicing law, and I practiced with him from '57 until '60. Three years I practiced with him, during which time I volunteered to the Circuit Court to take all of the criminal defense assignments, so I received all of those appointments in the county for three years and...

DePue: This would be the circuit court of...

Mills: Of Cass County, Eighth Judicial Circuit. There were eight counties in the circuit. Then I ran for State's Attorney in 1960 and was elected. So then I prosecuted for four years. I was running for State's Attorney and put in my application for a commission in JAG with the Army Reserve during that campaign. So it was sometime at the end of '60 when I put in my application. And that went to St. Louis, which was then, I think 5th Army Headquarters. It moved from Chicago to Saint Louis, and that was in the process at that time. Then I was elected and sworn in and began prosecuting there and then...

DePue: This still in Cass County.

Mills: That was still in Cass County, right.

DePue: Sorry to interrupt, but I am curious. You were running on what political ticket?

Mills: Republican.

DePue: And why?

Mills: Well, why do we become? Most of us, I think, what we come from. We are the product, if not the victim, we are the product of our environment. I had always been in a family that was rabidly Republican. Grandfather began it. He was a great Republican supporter. And of course both—my uncle Epler had been a state Senator for two terms as a Republican, and my father had been two terms as a State's Attorney as a Republican. I just never knew of anything else in my household. So it was by osmosis, I guess, that we become whatever we are. So anyway, during this period when I was State's Attorney the process had begun. Then I was approved for a commission and so I went down to Saint Louis, was sworn in. This was in early '61, '60, yeah, early '61.

DePue: So a direct appointment? No OCS?

Mills: No, that's absolutely correct. Direct.

DePue: What was your rank once you were...

Mills: Captain. In fact I had put in for a first lieutenant. The Chief of Staff down there when I had been interviewed –you have to be interviewed and all that business –and I was interviewed. I think he said, "Well, with your two years of enlisted active duty, and with this amount of time that you've been admitted," he said, "you're eligible for a captaincy." So I came out with tracks. Went in thinking I was going to get a silver bar and ended up with two of them. So that was in '61. And I want to tell you—well, of course I was State's Attorney during this period. And I had to do—I'm trying to recall exactly. There was no unit where I could become a member of the unit for any pay purposes or even for points. They had them in those days. They had them scattered around, Reserve units, and they were—what the military

was trying to do was to really get everything around the flagpole. They didn't like all these units out here. So they were trying to do that. And as a matter of fact it was almost impossible to find a unit that you could get into. So what I did end up doing was being attached for training purposes to a couple of different units. One summer it was up at Fort Sheridan, and the detachment commander was out of New Orleans, and putting together patchwork for training purposes.

DePue: Were these always Reserve units?

Mills: Always Reserve units, always Reserve. And that was tough to do. It was very very difficult to do.

DePue: Why Reserves versus the National Guard, which had much more of a tradition of units in community-based...

Mills: Oh, that's true, absolutely. I can't tell you why. I just had not had any direct contact with the Guard people.

DePue: Of course the Guard at that time was much more oriented toward combat units, especially infantry and artillery. And the Reserves, I think at that time, had more of a tradition of some of the other service support kind of organizations and things like Civil Affairs and CID I would think.

Mills: Sure. I think that's probably true. But in any event I ended up doing odd pickups that I could find. I made an attempt to organize a JAG unit right here in Springfield, Illinois. That's where I ran into a wall, because they were not only not starting new units, they were trying to consolidate all of the other units they already had. They just didn't want any more units out there. Money was getting tough. Appropriations were always on the down for the military. And this was all after the Korean situation and before the Vietnam.

DePue: Was this also the time when there was a peacetime draft?

Mills: Absolutely. We had peacetime draft.

DePue: So you had no shortage of people serving in the military.

Mills: Oh, no, not at all, because everybody was getting their notices. Well, it so happened that I finally was able to find a unit that was a composite unit of all services –only officers from all services –that was handling Selective Service Reserve work, and they're earmarked for that purpose. So I was fortunate enough to be able to get into one of those units that was right here in Springfield.

DePue: What year would that have been?

Mills: That was 1965. So I had four years of commissioned service where I had one hell of a time getting enough points. Now I had enough points to stay active in the Reserve, but I didn't have enough for good retirement years, so I ended up with thirty-two at

the end of my career. I had thirty-two years, but I had only twenty-eight good ones out of the thirty-two.

DePue: Now you've discussed points, and I'm sure most people have no idea what we're talking about there. Very briefly describe what you mean by points.

Mills: Well, in order to have a good military year, and by good we mean one that counts for retirement, a minimum of twenty years, you have to have fifty points per year. And the fifty points, two-week increments for instance for summer Reserve duty for training. And you get twelve or fourteen, depending upon the number of days that you've got. A couple for travel if you're traveling somewhere, and twelve of the days. Correspondence courses can add up and make up some of the difference, but your drills and your summer duty are the primary guts of making your fifty points. So if you're in a unit that drills once a week for fifty weeks, the other two being the summer two-weekers, then you've got enough points if it adds up to fifty, and so forth.

DePue: So the early sixties was a busy time for you. You're State's Attorney.

Mills: I am.

DePue: You're now pursuing a military career, trying to patch together enough points to have a good year. And I suspect you also got married somewhere around there.

Mills: I did. Got married in 1962. Rachel Keagle, K-e-a-g-l-e, and I got married in June of 1962, and that's the best decision I ever made in my life.

DePue: Where did you meet Rachel?

Mills: I met Rachel at the apartment of two of my friends, a couple of guys; one was a banker, one was a lawyer. They had a singles party. They rolled up the rug and they had a keg of beer. And if you didn't drink beer, which I do not, and I've never cared for beer, so if you didn't want beer, you had to bring your own, B-Y- whatever it is.

DePue: BYOB.

Mills: BYOB, right.

DePue: Bring your own booze.

Mills: Yeah. And so I was invited as a young bachelor, and a bunch of us were there. I see this good-looking blonde out on the floor dancing with a guy, and I thought, "Oh, I think I'd like to meet her." So I cut in on them. And by golly, the guy that I cut in on, his name was Dick Mills. Right. And I knew of him. He was in the ad business here. Ad agency here in Springfield. He and I had talked on the phone because we had both gone to the same clothier, Arch Wilson's, and they had mixed up our bills. So there were two Richard Mills's: I'm over in Virginia and he's here in Springfield, and we both go by the name Dick as our nickname. We had talked

about our bills and we had straightened things out that way, so we knew each other, but I never met him. So here he was. Anyway he was gracious enough to step aside, and I danced with Miss Rachel, and we hit it off, and took her out for a bite to eat later that evening and then started dating. When I called her for the first date she really didn't know which Dick Mills it was. They lived at the lake out here, and it's forty-five miles from Virginia to their home at Lake Springfield. So when I drove in the driveway she didn't really know which one to expect. But it worked out fine.

DePue: She wasn't disappointed with the one she got.

Mills: Well, now I wouldn't go that far. I don't know that. At least history speaks.

DePue: Well, you had waited a little bit longer to get married.

Mills: Yes. I was thirty-two years old.

DePue: Okay. Now let's get back up to 1965 when you finally found this Selective Service, an SSS unit I guess they called them, Selective Service System unit, in Springfield.

Mills: That's correct.

DePue: That's an interesting time to land in this job too. Can you talk a little bit about that experience?

Mills: Yes. I was fortunate enough to get into this unit. It was commanded by a full colonel. We always had an extra full colonel who was the exec, because these are all different, Air Force, Army, Navy, Coast Guard. We've had them all in the—and Marines. We had a Marine in the unit at one time. And the Selective Service Reserve is a military Reserve unit that supports and is a part of the Selective Service System of the country. It was commanded by Lieutenant General Louis B. Hershey. He, as a major general, had been in charge of the draft and the Selective Service all during World War II. A Selective Service Reserve had been established to assist the Selective Service Boards, the draft boards, all around the country.

DePue: Which are civilians.

Mills: Which are civilians. To assist them in recruiting the members of the board, helping them with various projects and deferments and so forth, such as agriculture, so forth. And it was a very—I don't like to use the word select, because Selective Service –but it was difficult to get into, because there's always a whole bunch of reservists who would like to get into these paid unit positions for drill purposes. Consequently there's always a waiting line to get into these. At the same time they want to have some balance; they want to balance all of the branches so that they're all represented throughout the country.

DePue: Was this position you had with Selective Service a legal position?

Mills: Well, no, not in and of itself.

DePue: But that helped?

Mills: But it certainly helped, I think, the fact that I was. We had one other lawyer in our unit that was already there when I became a member of it, and I was the second. Then we had a couple of bankers and we had a couple of school superintendents and an insurance executive and a CEO of a supply house in Decatur.

DePue: So a talented group.

Mills: Yes, yes. And all, of course, with degrees. In any event it was a very, very interesting group to be with. Over the years we became vastly good friends where we socialized with each other all the time. Still do, those of us that are left. And of course attrition, natural attrition always is present.

DePue: How long did you serve with that unit?

Mills: I was with that unit until I retired. In fact I was the commander of the unit for five years. And then I retired in '85. In '85 I retired, in the fall, October of '85. So I was with them twenty years.

DePue: Did they drill over at the National Guard Armory at Camp Lincoln?

Mills: No. We drilled here in Springfield, and we drilled in either Selective Service Headquarters while they were still an active viable going on, and we had that, until it went into deep standby. When Selective Service went into deep standby, then we moved to the Armory Building right here in downtown.

DePue: Right across from the State Capitol.

Mills: That's right, exactly. And so we utilized that building. But by this time the Guard had already moved out of the building and was out at Camp Lincoln.

DePue: Okay. Well, let's talk some about your experiences working in Selective Service at the height of the Vietnam War when there were so many people trying to avoid going to Vietnam.

Mills: Oh yes, there sure were, and there were a lot of those who either went over the border to Canada or went abroad. A number of them just refused to show up, so of course they were on wanted lists and the FBI and everybody else was out hunting for them. We had a lot of that, and we had a lot of protesters.

DePue: Did the Selective Service Board hold meetings where young men had to appear and state their case? Did it work that way?

Mills: No, all the board does at that time was to sift through and decide who gets what deferment. Remember, the big, big thing at that time was deferments: college deferments and all other kinds. But particularly the college ones were the ones that caused the biggest amount of difficulty. And they would just call and decide who

was going to go, who was not deferred. And then whenever they needed a quota and local boards did their work, and they said, "Our county," and these were by counties of every state, had its own draft board, and they get the call and this county is responsible for X number of bodies. They would go through and those not deferred, they would make the choices and...

DePue: Send out the letters.

Mills: Send out the letters. "Greetings."

DePue: "Greetings from the United States Army" or whatever.

Mills: Whatever.

DePue: I want you to talk a little bit about how the deferment system came to be in the first place. Why that particular system?

Mills: Well, the history of it of course goes all the way back to the Civil War. The Civil War was the watershed for drafts. Remember the riots that we had in New York? These were bloody. There were people who died in these riots. Back in those days you could also buy your way out of service by paying somebody to take your place, and it was a nasty system. But that's where we first got this draft thought, this idea, which was nothing more than an extension of the old Minuteman militia type...

DePue: That every citizen had an obligation to serve.

Mills: Exactly. And so over the years it got to World War I. And remember we had the first capsule was drawn out and all of this. So this was the historic background. But the idea of the deferments was that we have to have a great organization of civilians to supply what is needed for the military to do its job and to do its fighting. And that meant that everybody had to contribute somehow. The farmers, there were agricultural deferments. And remember there was a lot of difficulty up in Wisconsin over other areas of the country where they got all these dairy deferments. And others were jealous of those great numbers. But this is where cheese was made. This is where the milk came from and all.

DePue: And a labor-intensive business.

Mills: And very labor-intensive at that time in particular, where we didn't have all the milking machines and we didn't have all the—so they were sorely needed to support the war effort. And that's how the deferments really came about. The shipbuilders, the riveters, all of these people who were making the Liberty ships and making the guns and the ammunition and munitions, they just had to have them, and that's where the deferments were utilized.

DePue: But my impression was that General Hershey really had to do some major rethinking about the deferment system when you had a peacetime draft and you don't need this huge number of soldiers going into the military.

Mills: Exactly, exactly. And so there was always a constant redirection, or a fine-tuning. One of the biggest fine-tunings came about because of religious deferments. We had Jehovah's Witnesses. We had all kinds of different sects. I'll give him every bit of credit, because he set up an organization, a think-tank, on how we can handle all of this but keep it in balance, and everybody has to serve. That's the theory, that everybody serves as best they can in this general effort.

But then religious freedom and conscientious objection to bearing arms all has to be in balance. We've got to recognize that it's there. So he worked out a real system of protocols and understandings with the various religions and sects that objected to the bearing of arms and the failure to salute the flag and by bearing oath to anything other than the Lord, etc. So with each one of these groupings he worked out protocols, and they agreed to certain things, some of which was no bearing of arms, but we will serve in non-combatant duties within the military. And then there were some that you couldn't get them into the military at all, but they had to serve in some other capacity to support the effort, but in a deferred critical job or profession or whatever. So he has worked all these things, he and his staff in Washington. It was really quite interesting to see how they operated, and very efficiently. I was very amazed.

DePue: Well, I'm curious that you said that, because by the time you get to '68, '69, '70, the draft system, the draft in the United States, is the lightning rod. It is the thing that young men are most protesting over in terms of the Vietnam War. Do you believe that it worked efficiently throughout the war?

Mills: I think it did. Considering all the adverse PR and all because—nobody—did you ever hear of any of them going out and burning their draft card out there behind the barn? Well, hell, no, they don't, they burn it in front of the TV cameras. That's the only place you burn a draft card, and that's the only time you raise any—it's not the conscientiousness, it's not the thought process. If it were, they'd tear up their draft card and say the hell with it, and let it go at that. But oh, no, it's got to be in front of those TV cameras. And somehow we muddled through it. It was not always pleasant.

DePue: So what was your reaction when you saw that kind of stuff going on?

Mills: Well, after all, you're in the Reserve and you're in the military, and you answered the call, and why shouldn't everybody else? This is the way it is.

DePue: So were you angry or just perturbed or...

Mills: Oh, I would say probably more just pissed off. That simple. No sense in making a big deal out of it. But it was interesting to see and to be a part of all of this, because here I'd been into that Reserve now since '65, and in '67, '68, '69, this was big stuff. I know that I did several different tours during those years. Several times I went to the General Counsel's Office in Washington, of Selective Service. Colonel Dan Omer was the Deputy Director and General Counsel. I did a couple of tours

there, during which time I drafted correspondence in federal cases where they were prosecuting the various defendants who failed to comply with their draft notice and failed to report as ordered. Everything had to be prepared there. See, each state had a Selective Service Headquarters. All that time there were forty-eight of them. Every state had that, and then of course you had the national. National sent out the directives of how to handle the different types of cases and what was needed in each file and what was then to be presented to the local US Attorney for prosecution for failure to report as directed and ordered without a deferment, without any other valid reason for not reporting, complying with the orders.

I know that the other lawyer in my unit and I did one tour up at Madison, Wisconsin, during which time there were several prosecutions in Milwaukee. We went over to observe those and to be available to assist the US Attorney if needed on any of the files. It was very interesting.

DePue: Would you say that your station here was aggressive in pursuing people who had violated Selective Service, who had not shown up for the draft?

Mills: I would say that in this region—and I can't speak really for Chicago, because I just didn't have any hands-on experience with them up there –but my impression was that when you get away from the large metropolitan areas you have a much more stringent prosecution of those who failed to follow their Selective Service directions. Whether that is because of the PR and all of the news coverage in the big cities or if that's just because the numbers are greater and they're going up to Canada or what, I don't know. But the impression that I got was that down here on Mr. Lincoln's prairie we're all a lot more concerned about our duties as citizens, whether we like it or not, and we're going to do the right thing, than that amalgamated mass of metropolitan existence. I don't know. It's hard to say. I think I'd need a PhD in sociology.

DePue: Well, I suspect sitting in the judge's chair you get quite a bit of sociology anyway.

Mills: Listen, we're jacks-of-all-trades, I'll tell you.

DePue: What was your impression then when the protests and the anguish over the draft system got to the point where Congress decided to change all of that and go with a lottery system instead?

Mills: Well, it's like any other military change that comes along. You don't like change. None of us like change. We all resist to some degree, whether it's all the way or whether it's just throwing up the hands. We don't like change because we're used to whatever we're used to. And it's comfortable. We've become comfortable in it. But when the change comes you've got to be philosophical and stoic about it. It's here, and this is the way of the game. We got to play by the rules. So we did. But none of us were happy with it. But at least it was one way, and once it became the law we pushed it. And then of course we went into deep standby as far as Selective Service was concerned.

DePue: After Vietnam?

Mills: After Vietnam. And it was a nasty word, the draft and everything, for a long time.

DePue: What was your personal view about the Vietnam War, about whether or not we should have been there in the first place or how the war was prosecuted?

Mills: Well, it was a mixed bag. We were coming in after the French had been totally decimated, Dien Bien Phu and all that. They were wiped out. The French were simply annihilated there. And you get to feeling out of that, why would we become so involved in a situation where the French, after they have been at this for several hundred years of colonization around the world, and they of all people have the experience and the expertise to handle foreign colonies, and they were totally annihilated They were wiped off the face of the earth virtually.

DePue: Certainly at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu they were.

Mills: Yes, right, exactly. And so you feel, What are we getting into, what are we doing here, what is our interest. Of course we began with nothing more than a few little advisors that are sent in to assist the local regime, and then it grew from there. Then we went through LBJ's [President Lyndon B. Johnson] expansion of all of that and...

DePue: So would it be fair to say that your feelings about the Vietnam War were somewhat ambivalent except you had a job to do?

Mills: Yeah exactly yeah. And you just wonder, why are we there? Just like many many people are saying today as we speak, why are we in Iraq, why are we in Afghanistan.

DePue: And yet you didn't have any sympathy, from what it sounds like, with those young men who were trying to evade the draft?

Mills: That's exactly correct. Because regardless of whether you like it or not, this is a representative form of government that we have, and we elect our representatives, and if they do a certain thing and we have an order to do and to follow, we should be doing that. And a wide open "hell no, I won't go" attitude is adverse to the system of military compliance or obedience, whatever we want to say. Everybody has had orders of things that they didn't like and didn't approve of, didn't agree with, but we still do it, we do it out of a sense, I think, of commitment, number one, and number two because we took an oath to do it. Maybe that ought to be in reverse: the oath first and then the commitment. But whatever.

DePue: Of course you were working with people all the time who were trying desperately to avoid taking that oath.

Mills: Oh, to the last breath. They certainly didn't want it. But we see a lot of that in society today. We have become so much more independent as people. We think, therefore we are, I guess, but...

DePue: And you don't see that as a good thing?

Mills: Oh, I see it as a very good thing to think and to question, but at the same time, once the majority has spoken and once we have the decision made, then we must honor it and we must follow the dictates of what must take place.

DePue: Well, I suppose it's appropriate then to ask you what your opinions are about the situation in Iraq.

Mills: Well, we are in Iraq. We have a lot of troops over there, and we've got to supply them and we've got to support them as long as they're there. The situation is very complex and I don't think that there are any of us that really understand in totality what is going on. We're involved in a war against terrorism, and regardless of how we got there and what direction, we've got to win it. We've got to do everything we possibly can. Now there are some who say that we'll never win. And those I think are wrong. We may not come out with a victory like VJ and...

DePue: VE Day?.

Mills: VE. But we can at least be honorable in what we do and attempt to help the Iraqi people get back on track to something that will work with the western world. I don't know if we're going to be totally successful. But anything is better than the worst. And we've seen an awful lot of bad stuff take place. But it's very similar in some degree to compare Islam now with the Far East before. It wasn't until World War II, and World War II in the Pacific in particular, that we saw such atrocities as the Japanese perpetrated on not only the Filipinos but all—POWs that were picked up from ours, and the nasty terrible things that took place. The Far East views life as being worth less than a bowl of rice. That's hard for the westerner to understand. That's a hard thing, hard concept, for us from America to believe. Now we're in something fifty years later, sixty, where Islam dictates that Allah will allow you to go to paradise and call you home by killing innocent people and yourself at the same time. Now these are concepts that are very similar in one aspect: the bowl of rice and paradise. We westerners have a very difficult time trying to equate all of this attitude. It's so foreign to our beliefs in God, in doing what is right and the Golden Rule and the teachings of the Lord and so forth. We have a very very difficult time in trying to handle this. How do you do it? It's beyond most of us, I think, to sanely come to any conclusion. But we've got to continue to pursue and attempt. We can't have these terrorists running loose in the world to take lives and humongous numbers of them all at one fell swoop like we saw with the Twin Towers and all of this. So we've got to do something.

DePue: My sense is that maybe the Iraqi people haven't decided to love or respect Americans, but they have decided to abhor the terrorists in their midst who are slaughtering their innocents.

Mills: One would certainly hope so. And there are indications, I think, that that is true. But it's still a long way from fruition.

DePue: And a lot more pain and suffering, I think, we're going to see before the end of it.

Mills: Oh boy. I'm afraid so.

DePue: We have been at this longer than you and I would have predicted to begin with. It's over two hours. We haven't talked much about your years as a Justice of the Appellate Court of Illinois in the Fourth District, 1976 to 1985. And we didn't talk much about your years in your current position as United States District Judge, Central District of Illinois, from '85 to the present.

Mills: That's correct.

DePue: Could you tell us very briefly how it was that you were selected for this position? Because that's quite a distinction.

Mills: Well, it certainly was an honor. I was out mowing my yard.

DePue: That's not what I expected to have the start for the story. This will be good.

Mills: Rachel came to the door and yelled and waved at me and said the White House was on the phone. So I shut off the mower and I went right in, picked up the phone. "Is this Judge Mills?" "Yes it is." "This is the White House and I'm going to ask you to hold for just a moment while I transfer you to Camp David." And so click click and another lady comes on the line and says, "Is this Judge Mills?" I said, "Yes it is." And she said, "Would you hold just a moment for the President, please?" And I said, "I'd be delighted to." And here this voice comes on and says, "Judge Mills, I just wanted to call and tell you that I have before me a document and it says commission. And I want you to know that I'm going to sign it because it's going to make you the United States District Judge for the Central District of Illinois. Do you have any objection to that?" And I said, "Oh, Mr. President, I'm thrilled, and I certainly assure you that I will do everything that I possibly can to make you proud of that signature that you're going to put on there." And he said, "Well, I'm confident that that's going to be the case, Judge, and I just wanted you to know that I'm signing your commission as of this very moment, and I want to offer my sincere congratulations." We didn't talk more than ninety seconds. But I'm telling you that that guy was—and his name was Reagan—and he was the most powerful communicator I've ever had any contact with. But it was amazing. You just felt a tremendous sense of thrill.

DePue: How did your name come to his attention?

Mills: Well, it came over the course of, I guess, close to twenty-five years of being State's Attorney and on the bench and doing a sufficiently adequate job, both as a trial judge for ten years on the Eighth Circuit, Lincoln's old Eighth Circuit, and then for nine years on the Appellate Court of Illinois. I was fortunate enough to be considered.

Now US Senator Charles Percy, before he left the Senate, had a list that he had maintained of various judges and people, lawyers, just for judicial appointment consideration. And I had been on that list of his for several years. So at this time he was out of the Senate and gone but Robert H. Michel, Bob Michel from Peoria was our congressman and my personal congressman as well. I'm in his district. Bob and I had been good friends for years.

DePue: And at the time he's one of the most powerful men in Congress.

Mills: And at the time he was indeed. He was the number two powerful man.

DePue: The Minority Leader.

Mills: The Minority Leader of the United States House of Representatives. Bob was also the senior member of the Illinois delegation to the House of Representatives. At that time we had no Republican senators. Percy had gone out. And so we had two Democrat senators. But we had a Republican governor—I mean a Republican President. The way that goes is that if there is a federal judgeship available the President will make an appointment, but he does so on the advice of the US senator or senators from that state of his party. Since there were no Republican senators from Illinois at that time, it then moves down to the House of Representatives, and in this case the Illinois Republican delegation –the delegation of whatever number of Republicans there were –somewhere in the neighborhood of ten. The senior one, of course, is Bob Michel. So Bob Michel would step into the shoes of the US senator in advising the President. In this case Bob Michel selected me from a list that he had made up and also had incorporated some of Senator Percy's leftover list. Leftover list. I don't mean it in that sense at all. It's just that there was a pool. And the pool had changes. The pool dwindles down, particularly when you're no longer a senator. So there were several names on there that were also on Bob Michel's list. Well, Bob: I'm from his district, we were friends. But there was a selection process. And he went through the process and conferred with different people by telephone, personal contact, winnowing down a list to two or three finalists. I was a finalist and fortunately I was selected to be the one to submit to the President.

DePue: What was your confirmation process like?

Mills: The confirmation process was very interesting. Went out to meet with Bob Michel. And rather interesting –in to see Bob at a time when I had already been told by his AA, who was Ray LaHood, who followed him in Congress –that I had been selected but not to say anything until it was ready to be announced. In the meantime they wanted me out there in Washington. So I went out to see Bob personally. And

as I was walking in he is ushering out his visitor just ahead of me, and that visitor was Lee Iacocca. [President of Chrysler Corp.] Here Lee was –this is back in summer of 1985, or the spring—and Lee is dressed to the teeth. He's got striped shirt—he was just—he stepped out of a bandbox, all tanned and everything, very theatrical, very theatrical. And he's got a phalanx of about four or five assistants that are sycophants; really interesting to watch the process. Because Bob Michel, the second most powerful person on Capitol Hill, Bob never knew a stranger. Everybody, he's just gregarious, such a nice—but not overboard, and not sycophantic at all, but just smooth and—oh, that Lee, he was—anyway, so then Bob tells me that I'm in and sends me over to the Republican staff of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Don't forget, at this time the Senate committee is chaired by Strom Thurmond, and Strom's right-hand man was named Duke Short. Duke has been with the senator for many years and knows the ins and outs of everything, and so he gave me a briefing. He said, "Things are going to go this way, and you'll be asked some questions and so forth and so on." And he said, "It shouldn't be too difficult. We ought to get everything in there, right." He said, "Now here are the questions I think you're going to be asked." And he handed me a piece of paper and it's got several questions on it, four, I think. They're all softballs, every one of them is a softball. And just the day before in their meeting some poor guy got nailed by my own senator from Illinois, Senator Paul Simon, because he belonged to the Masonic lodge. There was some big little flutter at that time. And anyway there was a big—he got through, but it was a few pebbles in the pathway. But there wasn't anything like that on mine. And so anyway that's the way it worked.

Then I come back for the actual hearing and it was extremely cordial and very nice. It so happened that Strom could not be there for the hearing that day that it actually took place. And so it was Senator Simon who was presiding at that time and of course I knew Senator Simon and we had been active in Boy Scouts and several other things.

DePue: Another central Illinois boy.

Mills: Yeah that's right, Troy. And I was always on very good terms with Paul. I think he's always been an extremely honorable man and had great character. He was a little to the left of center but by God he was a true, true blue. Alan Dixon was the other US senator. Alan had a brother-in-law who was a judge from Independence, Missouri, and it so happens that he and I had been at the judges school together in the same class back in 1968, and he and I had become good friends. I had written him a letter years ago and told him that Alan Dixon was probably the best friend that the Illinois judiciary ever had in Springfield because he had gone to the mat, had gotten all kinds of appropriations in, he was very interested in the judiciary, and he had done a wonderful job, and he was a great supporter of us. We were opposite parties, but that made no difference. I had written this letter to his brother-in-law, who of course had copied it and sent it to Alan. I've known Senator Dixon here in Springfield in common things, and he's always been a swell guy. And so in any

event Bob Michel wanted to come over from the House to the Senate to introduce me directly to the committee.

Well, they had votes at the last minute. He could not get away and come over. So Al Dixon got up and he took all of Bob's notes and he introduced me to the committee, and you would have thought that this was the Second Coming. It went way beyond what Bob's prepared words were. It was just extremely gracious. And then here's Paul Simon, the other one from Illinois, temporarily in the chair of the committee, and he makes some very, very gracious remarks. The rest is history. It zoomed through.

DePue: It's hard to perceive that today in the acrimonious nature of court appointees that people of the opposite party would—that it would go quite like that today.

Mills: Isn't that something? It really is. But it was very gracious and it was well done. I had quite a pleasant experience out of it.

DePue: Do you mind if I ask what your judicial philosophy is?

Mills: Yes, I am a strict constructionist, number one. And I don't believe in this malleable Constitution. I believe that the hard core of it is right there in black and white. I do not believe that judges should be making and legislating any kind of law. That they should follow precedent and *stare decisis* [let the decision remain] and that that's their job to do. Now having said that, that does not mean that we are locked in stone, that there has to be some flexibility in bringing humanity and compassion and feeling into our work. And the law is pretty rigid, but there are plenty of safety valves that are already built in that have been considered by the Legislative Branch and that are already locked into the legislation. It doesn't seem to me that there are any opportunities to go beyond it. I feel very strongly that way.

DePue: Let's take this time now to finish up. Again we've been at it four and a half hours total here. And I always like to ask some general questions. Unfortunately we're not going to have the time here to talk about your Boy Scout activities and your lifelong involvement with the Boy Scouts. And I know that you have an intense interest in Abraham Lincoln –practiced in a courtroom that he practiced in, and have been involved very much in organizations involved with Abraham Lincoln. Do you want to say anything very briefly about either of those?

Mills: Well, we're coming into—the bicentennial year will come beginning next week. As soon as his birthday is completed, on the 13th we will be in the bicentennial year. It's amazing to think 200 years since this man, and what he has left. The legacy is just utterly beyond comprehension. For a man of such modest demeanor and background, almost boggles our minds to think that here the emancipation, a house divided, the second inaugural address, Gettysburg – to think that this all happened right here on his turf and on his prairie is amazing. We're sitting right in the dead center of it right here as we do this. It's amazing. But the man was truly one for the ages.

DePue: Would it be fair to say that his spirit has animated what you're about and your service here as well?

Mills: Oh, I don't think that I could avoid ever doing my work without the knowledge that his presence is here, and that he has been here all this time and left this legacy right in his home, both his familial one as well as his political one and his legal one. He was probably the finest lawyer that has ever been produced. I would almost say in this country. But it's a different kind. This man, for his time, was probably the most talented lawyer and the most widely respected one of his generation. He just had a knack for being a good man.

DePue: Let's go back to Korea a little bit, and ask you to reflect on your service in Korea. All these years later, are you proud of that service?

Mills: Oh, without question I am. I think we tried hard, and the odds were almost seemingly insurmountable when this conflagration began. And to think that with the downsizing of the military after World War II and the few troops that were still around, every unit was way under strength, and all of them, most of them, were in Japan. Some in Okinawa. And for them to keep that Pusan perimeter going without adequate resupply, without adequate troops, is really one for the books. General Dean and his small constabulary: just amazing. And then of course he was captured and spent all of that time in a POW. The first recipient of the Medal of Honor in Korea. Amazing.

DePue: Looking back, are you—I'm looking for the right word here –are you reconciled? Are you satisfied? What would be your view toward the way the war ended in a stalemate?

Mills: Well, we did not win it. But we didn't lose it either. And at least we ended up at the same place we were virtually when we began, when it began. So at least we had done that. And we had kept Communism from further spreading in that particular region. Of course we weren't satisfied that we had only a ceasefire and not a permanent peace. We were not pleased that we hadn't won by another great big humongous unconditional surrender. But the times were changing, and we knew that we would have to change with them. I think that that's happened. But no, I'm proud of my service, and I just regret that we did not have a complete unconditional surrender. But having said that....

DePue: You've had a long life in the law and reached to a very honorable level in that respect. Just listening to your story of the confirmation is a who's who in American history of that time period. It's amazing. You've had a long and illustrious military career. You've had a life of service with the Boy Scouts. You obviously have been a student of American history for an entire lifetime. Of all these things and probably some other things I haven't mentioned here, of all that what are you most proud of in terms of your personal accomplishments?

Mills: Well, I think I'm primarily proud of my career in the law. I just celebrated my fiftieth year at the bar in May. And I just celebrated my forty-third year in the robe. So I'm proud of that and I'm proud of the years and opportunities of service that I've been given, and I hope it continues as long as my health is in good shape.

DePue: It looks like it's in pretty good shape now.

Mills: Well, I feel good. And I continue to go. I spend most of my time now as a Senior District Judge of sitting on courts of appeal around the country by designation where they have extra heavy loads and where they need the help or where they have vacancies on their court, and they need the extra judgepower. I enjoy that very much because I enjoy writing and I enjoy opinions. I intend to continue to do that, and that is something that you don't have to have a great deal of physical exertion in order to accomplish that, although I'm sure that sitting on your backside may be considered work to some. But in any event it's been a marvelous adventure, let's put it that way.

DePue: Well, with all of these accomplishments behind you, you've earned the right to pass on some wisdom to future generations. I'll give you that opportunity as our closing.

Mills: I think the most important thing is our honor: that we must preserve it, we must fight for it whenever it is necessary and we are called upon to do so, and we should never ignore it, and it should be foremost in our thoughts and our mind, because we as a country and as a nation are only as good as we believe ourselves to be, and we must uphold and fight for the conscience of the United States of America.

DePue: Very good. Do you have any final comments?

Mills: Well, only this, that our sessions have made me think back on things that I had forgotten were really there, so it's been a great refresher. And Doctor, I appreciate your taking the time to do this, and cause me to reflect upon the past, which of course is the prologue to the future.

DePue: Well, it's certainly been my honor, and it's been an awful lot of fun talking to you as well, Judge. So thank you very much.

Mills: My pleasure indeed, Dr. DePue.

DePue: Thank you.

Mills: Thank you.

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