

Colonel Dominic Ruggerio Oral History Interview

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PART I

Clarke: This is the oral history of Dominic Ruggerio.¹ And if you don't mind, could you spell your name for me?

Ruggerio: Sure, my name is R like in Robert, U like in uniform, G like in golf, G like in golf, E like in echo, R like in Romeo, I like in India, O like in Oscar. Ruggerio. Kind of a hard J, G. Some people call in Regario, some people call it Ruggio. But it's Ruggerio. It's an Italian name. I'll start by telling you I grew up in basically an Italian family with a father who was an immigrant. He came to this country from Italy at age four. My mother was of an Italian family, born in the States, but grew up primarily in an Italian household. Although Italian was spoken in my household, it wasn't the primary language. In my grandparents' household, it was the primary language. So, did I learn it? I learned a little bit of dialect, because both families were from different parts of Italy. So I grew up in that, my dad was basically a factory worker who worked his way up to foreman status in a General Motors facility. And he spent fifty-one years working for General Motors. He was also a member of a National Guard organization, as a youngster. And so were several of his brothers. It got to the point where, at the beginning of WWII, he had an option of going on active duty when they federalized his unit, or just leaving the organization. And because he had two children at that time...my mother was not a military fan as such, and she didn't want him to go and leave her with two kids. So he chose to get out. But he always had a leaning towards a military, you know, I would have thought he would have been a career person had he pursued it. But he didn't. So he had some influence on me, for example, as a youngster. I say my day in the military started at age five, when he took me to a parade at West Point. And I declared at that particular time, I'm going to be a soldier. And my feeling never changed. I knew from the time I was five years old and took in that parade for the first time that I was going to pursue the military. And I did. Even through my upbringing in grade school I was a

¹ Col. Ruggerio provided more detail, as needed, in his review of the interview.

member of, you know, the Cub Scouts and the Boy Scouts, and I stayed there and went on to become an Explorer Scout beyond the Boy Scout level. I stayed in the scouting business. I have a sister who is six years older, much smarter than I was of course, so I saw the hand writing on the wall when my sister graduated college at age nineteen and was a teacher, and lo and behold I had her for a homeroom teacher for a little bit in my ninth grade. And that was enough. And she said to my dad, "You've got to get this guy out of my classroom." So anyway, I pursued, and the teachers would say to me, "Well, have your sister help you, have your sister help you," so instead of pursuing that, I did some investigating of my own. I asked my dad if I could -- I was a pretty good baseball player -- if I could go off to prep school. We did some investigating and, lo and behold, I found a military prep school. So at the end of my sophomore year in high school, I went off to Bordentown Military Institute in Bordentown, New Jersey, where I played some baseball and I also learned to study. One of the things that...one of the primary functions was to study. Then, in my high school era, I decided I was going to apply for the Air Force Academy. I wanted to become a fighter pilot. Lo and behold, I took the exam, I was fortunate enough to get a principal appointment from, believe it or not, Senator Prescott Bush, who was George H.R. Bush's father, so George W. Bush's grandfather. He was the senator of the state of Connecticut, and I was able to get an appointment from him at that time. Unfortunately, several days before I was to pursue the event and go out to Colorado, I received a telegram saying I had failed to meet the depth perception requirements on the eye exam. And at that time they were only taking pilots. So, I had a great headmaster at my prep school, and he said, "You know, you ought to consider going to Norwich University, because you're a New England guy and Norwich is in Northfield, Vermont, it's the oldest private military school in the country." He filled me in in great detail, that ROTC was founded at Norwich and you could pursue a military career right there if you wanted to stay with it, it was a small school, he said, "You need a small school." Lo and behold, I applied and got into Norwich, and got there and at the end of my freshman year, thought I would apply to West Point. And I did, and I received a first alternate's appointment to the military academy by a congresswoman in the state of Connecticut at that time. Lo and behold, I didn't get appointed, so I said, "I'll stay at Norwich," there were guys who I attended Norwich with, who did -- were fortunate enough to get appointments -- and left the Norwich environment and pursued the military that way. I wasn't fortunate enough to go to West Point, but I loved my time at Norwich, and at that particular time, you know, second year, you start forming your friendships and your camaraderie and, you know.

the environment, so you're content. A little more content, secure-wise. So I decided to stay at Norwich. As an academic student, there was a lot to be desired on my part. I was a good cadet, from the standpoint that I could shine my shoes and look sharp and attentive and that sort of stuff. But I knew I had to buckle down, my dad said "You have to buckle down if you want to stay there." Took a summer course or two at Norwich as well, to straighten out some academics that didn't go well the first two semesters. Lo and behold, I stayed on at Norwich and pursued a degree in English. And because I had tried to get out of school a little bit earlier, was able to pursue a second minor...a second major, and I had a Psychology and Education degree, as well. And then I pursued the military, was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant of armor in the Army Reserve. As a distinguished military graduate, I didn't receive the RA at that appointment, at that time -- at graduation -- because we had already reached our quota. And I wasn't one of those who met the top ten or whatever. But I was a DMG so that qualified me to apply for a regular Army commission at a subsequent date. So I was commissioned a second lieutenant, was scheduled to go on active duty as a USAR officer about a year after I graduated. Not quite a year. because of the increased work on the Berlin Wall, I was activated five months early. I was activated in January of 1962 to pursue active duty, as an armor officer.

Clarke: Let me ask you a quick question, to go back when you started your conversation about your interest in the military at the age of five, what do you think that was?

Ruggerio: A number of things. I guess I liked the regimentation that I saw on that parade field. I liked the history that I had heard, both my dad had educated me a little bit on what West Point was all about and what the Army was all about, plus I had a couple of uncles who were, you know, soldiers in WWII and I heard their stories a little bit. It's just the, I guess, the excitement, the music, the fanfare, you know, the pomp and circumstance, the precision -- everything looked precise. Plus, when you go to West Point or a place, you see history. You see things from the past. And I think that was what connected it, and I said, "I think I'd like to, you know, follow that." One of the points, I didn't mention to you, as a student at Norwich, as an ROTC student, we were subsidized a little bit. Particularly, we received a stipend every month as an active member once you entered the advanced program. At that time, you were receiving \$27.90 per month as your stipend in the advanced ROTC program. At that point, I had heard, "Well, you know what, you can participate a little bit more if you wanted to enter the National Guard as a student." Well, I said, "Can you do that?" that was my question, "Can you do it and be a member?" "Oh yes, you can." And all

of that time, you get credit for...plus you get another little stipend check for being a member of the National Guard. It wasn't a lot of money, but. So I did that, I pursued it. I was one of probably three or four students in my class who did join the National Guard. And that follows through to the end of my advanced program when I was commissioned, just discharged from the Army National Guard- honorably- and commissioned as a second lieutenant. But the two years I spent as a guardsman counted towards my active duty time. So instead of starting out as a second lieutenant with no time in service, I started as a second lieutenant with two years' service from the National Guard that counted towards pay. So again, another small stipend, but another motivator. As an enlisted guardsman, I learned to be a mortarman, I learned all about the enlisted structure, so that was an added feature of my upbringing, so to speak. And, Norwich being a military school, I got the infantry side from the guard's perspective, and I got the armor side from the Norwich perspective, because Norwich had five tanks as part of the equipment motor pool at school.

Clarke: What was your rank in the guard?

Ruggerio: I was a private first class. Yeah, private first class. And that was after two years, so...

Clarke: You had mentioned, you had applied to West Point, and then that didn't work out for you and you were disappointed by that. What in your mind now, in hindsight, do you think about the difference between West Point and Norwich?

Ruggerio: I think, this is from my perspective, I think the size of Norwich and the Cadet Corps size, allows the students a little more opportunity to become a leader in the corps. Whereas West Point is so much larger in their corps cadets that it would take a lot more time and maybe not everybody gets that opportunity. I'm not sure because I'm not sure how the West Point structure is today. Whether they have the opportunities they would in a smaller environment. In terms of the old days, everyone thought that if you weren't a West Pointer, you weren't going to climb the ladder. But I think if you were to look at the opportunities out there today -- in fact the current chief of staff of the Army is a non-West Pointer -- there were several non-West Point general officers who worked for me as junior officers. So I think the opportunities are equal. I like the fact that ROTC was founded at Norwich, that's a little feather in the hat, and it's maintained its credibility over the years and has done extremely well. Norwich was the first military environment in the country to accept women in their corps cadets, and actually went out [to other military colleges] and helped integrate women into

their corps of cadets, as they did at Virginia Military and the Citadel as well. So I think, if I've answered your question...the only thing I could add, in that small environment, my friends today are the guys I went to Norwich with. And that camaraderie has lasted fifty-six years now, so, I think that small environment was good [for me].

Clarke: It's kind of profound, their producing as many commissioned officers as well, so it's kind of an interesting 200-year experiment, right?

Ruggerio: The other interesting facet to Norwich today is, I think behind Annapolis, today, Norwich produces more Naval and Marine Corps officers per year than any other college in the country. That is pretty good.

Clarke: That is very good. Well, thank you for that, I was kind of curious about some of those thoughts you had on that. You had gotten to the point where you were basically just commissioned an officer, and you had been activated five months early, so what's going on at that time in America and with you?

Ruggerio: Well the Cold War was perking, so to speak. Things were transpiring in the European environment. I...was activated and went to Fort Knox for my Armor Officer Basic Course. At that time, I think Armor Officer Basic was about an eight-week preparation course. Fortunately, for me as a Norwich graduate, I had a lot of that armor experience [at Norwich] that I was getting in the basic course. Back in those days, certain schools specialized, and Norwich was primarily an armor school, an engineer school, and a Signal Corps school. We were prepping guys to go those routes. So my basic ROTC summer camp was at Fort Knox, Kentucky. It wasn't a general thing, as such, it was armor oriented. I had a good taste of the tank business before I even left campus. We got to Fort Knox, and the Norwich fellows [graduates] who were in my class, were able to help our colleagues who were just coming out of ROTC from other schools and hadn't had the experience we did. From that perspective, you created another group of friends that were going to be friends at least in your military spectrum. I felt very good about that basic course. Some of the instructors that we encountered in the basic course were some of the instructors that we had encountered at ROTC summer camp two years prior, it was good. It was very good. From that point, I had applied to go to Ranger school. And was able to get through part of the Ranger course, but because of pneumonia, I was to be recycled, and was not able to do so. I had orders to go to Europe and they said, "Try it when you come back from Europe," but I didn't, at that point. I went to Europe, was assigned to the 1st Squadron of the 14th Armored Cavalry, which was on the East/West

German border in Fulda, Germany. At that time, there wasn't a barbed wire fence along the border. There was a fence marking, but it was just about the time I arrived in Europe -- when East Germans started to mine that area. So you had a fifteen meter minefield on either side of the fence. When I first got there, you were able to go right up to the fence, and show [stuff] and talk with East German border guards. I mean they were just like, as close as I'm sitting to you, that's how close we were able to get. We traded belt buckles and Playboy magazines, everything for uniform accoutrements, they would share them. But after, oh, probably the first year I was there, you couldn't do that anymore. The fence was in place, the minefields were in place, because people were trying to cross the border and they didn't want that to happen, either. The border patrol increased its numbers of patrols per day and night. We performed...we spent two weeks out and four weeks in, two weeks out and four weeks in, with your particular unit. Mine was assigned to a cavalry troop, and each troop rotated their border duties. So we did that, as well as trained. The irony of it, when I arrived to the squadron, I was the second non-West Point graduate officer to arrive in that squadron in two years. The first one was a young fellow from Chicago, who became best of friends and was subsequently killed in Vietnam, but he was my sponsor when I got there. Then seven or eight others from my basic course followed, so we had a little new group of folks who integrated with the West Pointers and just filled out that squadron really well. We all worked together, we all lived together, many of us were bachelors at that time. Some of the married couples brought their families

Clarke: What does a daily patrol look like in 1962 Germany?

Ruggerio: Open Jeep, you and your driver, you had, you know, an outpost. You had at least two to four people per shift. For example, my platoon was on border duty. So I had at least three outposts that we were manning. We would rotate the platoon through those throughout the day. And then those same outposts would be manned at night, as well. So we would do a day patrol, we would go from outpost to outpost, and we'd do any reporting we saw of movement of vehicles or troops or anything on the other side. We had spot reports to do all the time. And then at night, we would do the same thing. But we would live out there, there were a couple of Air Force radar sites on the highest peaks in the area...I mean, so high that there was snow there in July. That tells you the perspective of the height of it. But we would go to the Air Force, we kind of liked it because the Air Force had meals in their mess halls 24 hours a day. So you could go in and eat

any time you wanted to, and it was good food. As we always said in the Army, the Air Force always eats much better than the Army.

Clarke: What was your number one concern as you were patrolling?

Ruggerio: Safety of the troops. Ensuring that they knew what they were looking for. You know, just to say, "There's nothing out there, nothing out there." But they had to stay alert. That was the key thing, because once in a while you'd get somebody who's not attuned who would fall asleep and you would catch them asleep, then you'd have to take some corrective action to ensure that doesn't happen. It's all a part of the training cycle, anyway. Instill the seriousness of that particular job, and the job responsibility. And they knew it was only for like two weeks at a time, and then we would come in and we would conduct other training like gunnery. People liked to form daily exercises, gunnery or operational controls, or integrating your mortars. As a cavalry platoon, you had tanks, you had scouts, you had mortars, and you had infantry. So you had a little combined arms team yourself. So working as a cavalry platoon, got the training instilled in their minds so they knew when they got out there on their specific missions. It wasn't very long after my arrival that we did get alerted that we had to go, when John Kennedy was assassinated. So, that's the kind of preparation you do things for, and we were ready for it

Clarke: What were you looking for in particular? You mentioned this going from fences to mines to...

Ruggerio: Troop movements, civilians attempting to cross the border, there were occasions where people tried and then were blown up in the minefield. There was nothing you could do in that situation. If they made it across without hitting a mine, fine. There were, periodically, at night...more and more people would probe, just like you and I are sitting here. They would have little metal things and they would be on their hands and knees crawling, crawling across the area. They figured at night -- and there were towers on the other side with spotlights -- and they would rove. They'd have their spotlights going back and forth, but they wouldn't always, you know, if someone was crawling, they would hide or get in the position where they weren't detected as they probed across the minefield. So there were times when these outposts would accept people or help them through the wire once they got to this side of the fence. And that was the thing that they didn't want to happen. But we would look for those sorts of things, both day and night, but you saw most of that at night, and little of it during the day. There was one house that appeared on the border, and the way the house

was constructed, the guy had to end up closing half of the house because half of it was on the East German side and half of it was on the West German side. He lived on the West side, but the house was just cut in half, so to speak, walled off. It was just something unique. And you said, "Why? Why [with one half closed off]?" But anyway, our soldiers performed their duties, and, you know, at that time we had a draft. So we had a pretty good cross section of America as part of the organization. It was functioning, a lot of cohesion in the units. The training thing, once in a while you'd have a soldier that was not a team player or something, but you'd deal with that [as an individual case].

Clarke: What were you hearing about Vietnam at that time? Were you hearing anything in '62? Was it heating up a little bit?

Ruggerio: A little, we knew we had some advisors. They knew, they were throwing some carrots out for people who would volunteer to go at that particular time, early '62- '63 timeframe. They would talk about, "Oh, if you go you can add to your skillsets by, you want to volunteer to be a Special Forces guy?" You know, for a tanker, coming out of the tank business, that was kind of an exciting thing. But it was nothing on the realm other than, "Oh, you can become a Special Forces soldier and then become an advisor in South East Asia" that was the way it was advertised. And then, subsequently, as things started to build up, we would hear...I think it was in '65, was the first time a unit actually deployed. I want to say it was part of either the 173rd Airborne, or elements of the 101st, or...

Clarke: Some Marines, too.

Ruggerio: Some Marines as well.

Clarke: Well, so you're in Germany. You're along the border. You're doing your patrols. What's next, in this very...the reason I'm curious about this, it's just fascinating from the historical perspective, you know, I don't think a lot of people understand that era, or even the notion that it went from nothing but a fence to more things. So what's going on, I guess societally, from your perspective? What do you remember?

Ruggerio: Well, you know, you have the Bay of Pigs, when Kennedy was involved with the Cuban Crisis. And then, we hear things, "You guys gotta watch out, because the Russians are gonna come, the East Germans are gonna come. They're building up their forces, there's gonna be something happening." Then, when John Kennedy was assassinated -- I happened to be the squadron duty officer the night that he was assassinated -- and my bosses were all deployed up north to a boxing

smoker at one of the other units that night. Of course, I had to authenticate, making sure the message I was getting was true and correct and not some sort of a scam coming through. Then I notified the bosses, and they got on their helicopters and flew back to the Fulda base, and by the time they got back, I had already sounded the siren and we were deployed in our wartime positions, because everybody thought there was some sort of a conspiracy and the Russians were gonna come. That was the edict at that time. The Russians are gonna come. We [immediately] deployed, we stayed deployed for several weeks before we actually came back in to the base camp. We also had our staff working on what they called the 'NEO runs.' That's getting the civilians prepared to move out of the area, because if the Russians were going to come, we didn't want our civilians and our families there. So they had a specific route out of Germany, into France, places for the people to be redeployed, for family members to be redeployed during that era. So the hype was there, and then it just kind of fizzled out a little bit. But our alert status was maintained, in terms of readiness. And those alerts took place un-announced, at least monthly, sometimes bi-monthly, you know. Sometimes they would have it bi-weekly, you'd never know. Incorporated with those alert statuses, you had to maintain your training cycle. So we deployed to several major training facilities around the country of Germany at the time. One was Grafenwöhr; one was Wildflecken; one was Hohenfels where we would go for your gunnery programs [and tactical training]. When we would deploy, we would load your tanks on a train and load all our vehicles on the train. We'd have a convoy of vehicles that would drive, we would go for a month to a month and a half at a time. Another unit would come to our duty station to maintain the border patrol while we were gone. Thus, incorporated with all of this stuff that is going on, we had to ensure that the unit that is replacing us is trained, and knows what our outposts are, what our duties and responsibilities are, what the authentication requirements are for people coming in and out. It was a busy time, it was a busy time. Time did go by very quickly. As we used to say, we worked hard and we played hard. We were living on a nice compound, we had all the amenities that we needed to have there. We didn't have to worry about people going off post. People did, but we didn't have to worry about it as much. The Germans were very accommodating folks, we were on their grounds and turf. We'd take our tanks through their streets, and take them out through the country maneuvering our vehicles and killed one of their chickens, the US Government paid dearly for that chicken. They would determine how long a life that chicken would live, how many eggs that chicken

would lay, and then the government would pay. So if we killed a chicken, we were in trouble.

Clarke: So no running over chickens in your tank?

Ruggerio: Try not to, anyway.

Clarke: So you're a...in this 1st Squadron, 14th Armored Cavalry, you had how many tanks that you were in charge of?

Ruggerio: In my platoon...as a cavalry platoon leader, I had two tank, four scout vehicles, and I had a mortar track, with a 4.2-inch mortar mount, and had an infantry track, with an infantry squad of 11 soldiers. It was a...we called it a combined arms team. My primary vehicle was a jeep, but I also had, at that time, the M114 scout vehicle, track vehicle, as a primary vehicle to use if I needed a track vehicle. Then one of the tanks was mine if I needed to be on a tank. So we did that. We trained as a little combined arms team. We always used to say, a cavalry platoon leader could very easily assume the responsibility of a tank platoon leader. Because tank platoon leaders had five tanks, versus my two, [but cavalry platoon is a combined arm team].

Clarke: Got it. So you're in Germany, you're hearing a little bit about the brewing war in Southeast Asia. What's next in your progression of service here? When do you leave Germany, and what do you do next?

Ruggerio: I went over there as a brand new second lieutenant, and I came home after just shy of five years, and was then selected to go to the advanced course at Fort Knox. In addition to being a cavalry platoon leader there in Germany, during that timeframe I was also given the responsibility as a support platoon leader. A support platoon leader provides all of the logistics, fuel, and ammunition to the entire squadron. That was my job, at that point. I did that for a year to a year and a half. I then became an executive officer to a cavalry was my next job. Then, fortunately for me, my troop commander had orders to leave, and I assumed responsibility, for a short period of time, as the troop commander. So as a young lieutenant, I got to command a cavalry troop as well.

Clarke: So in that five years you're over there, you go all the way up, basically, to the top of a cavalry unit?

Ruggerio: A cavalry troop. Got the opportunity to do that. And then I came back to Fort Knox to go to the advanced course. Shortly after that [starting school], I got

promoted to captain. "What do I need to do?" Well, "I need more troop command time," according to the powers that be in Washington. So, "Here's what we're gonna do for you. You didn't finish your ranger course when you started, but now we're gonna send you to an airborne course." "We have a slot for airborne, but we don't need as many armor rangers at this particular time. So, you go to airborne school". I went to airborne school, here I am, twenty-seven years old, armored captain -- brand new armored captain -- going to airborne school at Fort Benning, Georgia, with young eighteen, nineteen year olds. However, I did have one sergeant first class E7 in the class who was forty-two, so he was kind of the papa dog. But I was kind of an old guy, considered in the group I was in. We started with 710 and graduated 500 in my class of airborne troops. In three weeks' time, that's pretty good. The first week at Fort Benning they give you a crew cut [and run everywhere]. Everyone is airborne qualified, you're running, you're doing everything. First week is ground week. You do pushups, sit-ups. It's all Simon-says type things, to how attuned you are to paying to what you're supposed to be doing, very key in an airborne situation. So ground week is doing all of that stuff. Tower week, they actually take you up in a harness to a 34-foot tower, because they claim, psychologically, if you're going to fear heights, 34 feet is the height you're gonna fear. That's what they teach. I don't know if that's still the premise of the day, but that is what they taught at that particular time.

Clarke: So 2,000 feet, 34 feet, might as well be the same at that point?

Ruggerio: Might as well be the same thing. So we got onto the 34-foot tower, they put us out on, of that tower on cables, we slide along these cables, it gives you a feel of what a parachute is gonna feel like when it opens...It's all sand on the bottom, so [landing is] pretty good. Then they have a 250-foot tower, and they raise you like an elevator in a canopy type situation, and they drop you with this canopy and it all reopens, and you just kind of land in the sand. They teach you how to land, hit, shift, rotate, so you don't break a leg, or break an ankle, or a hip. They teach you all of that stuff. But that's all part of listening to the instructions. You do that your second week, and the third week you're jumping out of an airplane. Okay? They take you up to 1200 feet, and you don't land in that airplane, they tell you that. You're going up, but you're not going to land in that airplane. The funniest part of my jump class was, I always seemed to get the jump master on board who looked just like Mr. Clean. Clean shaven head, didn't wear a helmet up there, and he could roll his eyes up to the back of his head, all you saw were the whites of his eyes. He would say, "Stand up. Get ready, shuffle to the door." And

when he did that, he would roll his eyes back, and you'd just be focused on him, and when you got to the door- boom boom- he'd hit you on the butt and you'd be out the door. It was that quick. So we did five jumps -- that quickly -- then you're jump qualified. You get shiny boots, khaki pants, blouse boots, and you've got your overseas cap with your jump patch on it, you're ready. You know, you're ready, you're fit to fight, physically a specimen by the time they get through with you. And then I went back to Fort Knox and I was assigned as a troop commander in a training cavalry squadron. Because of the experience I'd had in Germany, and I was training scouts, the people to replace the scouts and in the cavalry troops. So I did that. I was having fun! And then, after a short period of time, I had over a year and a half of troop command time under my belt, I became the Executive Officer to the squadron commander. So I went from a troop commander to an XO at the squadron level, an XO slot, [which is a "major's" position]. Which is pretty good.

Clarke: So let me ask you a question, you're the XO now, and you were an XO...

Ruggerio: I was a troop XO [in Germany, now a squadron XO normally held by a major]

Clarke: ...before, so there was this period of time...now was there any period of reflection you had, where you kind of look back to your time in Germany? Anybody in particular that you, that helped you or that you thought of or that was an example that you followed, or something like that?

Ruggerio: There were several people. As a young lieutenant, anyone who was senior to you was God at that particular point. You look at captains in the German...[environment and see] , some of them were WWII and Korea vets who are these guys, these guys were probably former sergeants who were given commissions, battlefield commissions, and were able to maintain that status for a while, and then they came to Germany and they were performing as senior captains. And I'm talking about back then, 40-year-old captains, and you don't hear about that very often anymore. There were several guys you always could say, I learned this from this particular person or I learned this. We had one individual, for example, who happened to be a former instructor of mine in the ROTC environment at Norwich, when I was a cadet. He became our squadron Executive Officer. He thought everybody ought to be a paratrooper, even a cavalry paratrooper. He taught me certain things I did want to and then he taught me certain things that I didn't want to do.

Clarke: Who was this?

Ruggerio: His name was John Albree. John Albree was retired down in Carolina now, [and recently passed away]. retired as a colonel I believe. Everybody who went to Norwich during my era remembers John Albree for something. Be it good, bad or indifferent, they remember John Albree for something. Then at Fort Knox, in that position, when I was selected to be the XO, the particular squadron commander at the time was a brilliant man. He had a PhD. But he was also a great tactician. He taught me a lot of things about the tactical performing of certain vehicles and the troops, and how you ensure that they understand what you're doing, and why they're moving from A to B. Why are they doing that, why aren't the moving from A to C. Because of this environment, he taught me a great deal.

Clarke: Who was that?

Ruggerio: His name was Neil Wheeler, Colonel Neil Wheeler. I'm not sure he's still living. But he was there a long time, just a great soldier. He also had Korean War time [experience] under his belt. He was a senior person at that time. I'm performing as squadron executive officer at Fort Knox, learning to deal with a little more administration on the battalion [squadron] level. Plus, the XO is the maintenance guy, that's his responsibility. I learned a lot about the motor pool requirements, and the statistics that need to go in the vehicle maintenance program. That was an education for me. Then I got a phone call one day, from my assignment officer in Washington. He said, "Hey, Dom, have you heard of the infusion program?" I said, "I've heard of the term infusion, but what are you talking about?" He said, "Well, we have a program now where we're taking [a select few of] armored officers and training them to become airborne infantrymen." I said, "Oh, is that why you sent me to jump school?" So they sent me to jump school, is that what they were meaning, he said, "No, we're taking thirty-three armored captains who have had troop command time, company command time under their belt, because the turnaround time for infantry captains has been so rapid in Vietnam. We need to supplement them so they get a little respite from having to go back in five or six months like they have been." Today is a different thing, because folks are going back in five or six months for redeployment. Back then, they were hesitant in sending people back that quickly to Southeast Asia. So they needed some help. They took thirty-three armored captains and said, "Hocus pocus, you're going to go to become airborne infantrymen." I said, fine, tell me what I need to do. "Well, they were gonna send you to a course," but I couldn't go to a course because I had a wife at that time who was getting ready to deliver a child, so it just didn't jive with the scheduling. I needed to be at Fort Knox while this child was born, so I didn't get to go to the course. He said, "Nah, that's okay,

you won't need to. You'll get it on the ground, you know, on the job training." At that particular time, I reported in to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. About three weeks later, my oldest daughter was only three weeks old, we went to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and reported in. Fortunately for me, there was an armor major working in the personnel office. He said, "Wow, another tanker." I said, "Well, I spent most of my time in the cav". He said, "That's good. Where do you want to go?" I said, "I want to go to the cav squadron." He said, "You can't go to the cav, you've been designated an airborne infantryman. You have to go to an 11series job and you can't go to a 12 job." 12 was the MOS specialty code for a tanker, it was a 12. You had to go to an 11 as an infantryman. I said, "I don't know anything about it. You have to explain it to me." He said, "Well, the best advice I can give you at this point, you have a choice of going to the 3rd brigade or the 2nd brigade," and I said, "Well, which one should I go to?" He said, "Well, I'd recommend you go to the 3rd brigade." I said, "Why that one particularly over the 2nd brigade?" He said, "It's very simple, the 2nd brigade commander hates armor officers." I said, "Okay, that's good enough reason for me. As a newbie in the infantry unit, that seems like pretty wise advice, thank you." So I went to [report to] the 3rd Brigade. Great commander. I could tell early on, he had spent time as a younger officer working for Creighton Abrams. He was an infantryman, and of course Abrams was an armor guy, so this guy definitely took a liking to armor officers. I was the first one to arrive in the brigade. He said, "Oh boy, I need you right outside my door right now." I said "I want to go to a troop unit, that's what I'm here for. They said I had to be an 11." He said, "Don't worry, we'll take care of you. I've got infantry officers, captains, who have no command time. And they need to get command time first. You've got 18 months troop command time, and these guys don't have any, so that's my priority. So you sit outside that door and help me and I'll take care of you." So right then and there, the old adage of, "You tie onto somebody's coattails as a junior officer and they're gonna follow suit, and they're gonna take care of you if you take care of them."

Clarke: Who was this?

Ruggerio: This guy's name was Larry Mowery, Colonel Larry Mowery. His call sign was 'Blue Eagle.' This guy was probably one of the finest colonels...a WWII vet, had two stars in his CIB. Just a great, great leader. Should have been a general officer, no question in my mind. This guy was destined to be a general officer but, you know, as all political things take place, there was a secretary of the Army of the time who thought he was too old. But, as a combat hero in Vietnam he would go where the action was all the time. Helicopter was always where the action was.

Clarke: How long did you work for him?

Ruggerio: Well, I joined the unit August of '67. He stayed with us for about nine months. But I joined them before we deployed, and I'll have to tell you about that. When I joined the 101st, I wasn't there for very long in the 3rd Brigade when we were deployed to a football field in downtown Detroit. Elements of the brigade were deployed during the '67 riots. We were there about two weeks, I think, and we got some notice at the time to return to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, in preparation for an overseas restricted deployment. And the cheers of, "Yay! We're getting out of the combat zone!" [Laughs]. Downtown Detroit. The buildings were burning and things like that, so, we're back to Fort Campbell.

Clarke: Before you get back to Fort Campbell, what was that like in Detroit? I mean, that's kind of an epic period in American History. A lot of cities burned and you had a lot of stuff going on, and you did have troops deployed?

Ruggerio: We had troops...we had troops deployed there to try to quell the looting and the rioting you know...just like...the National Guard from Michigan was there as well. There were...elements of 101st Airborne were there, as well as elements from other units from around the country at the time.

Clarke: What did you do?

Ruggerio: Just walked the streets, you know. Surveillance. Maintain quiet, making sure curfews were maintained. We were only there for a couple of weeks, but it was just enough to say, "God, this is America, you know? Buildings are burning, what's going on here?" And then we had troops fighting in Vietnam, not for this, you know. We couldn't think about the buildings burning, and you wonder, "Why are those guys over there when we have action going on over here," type things. It was just mesmerizing. They had riots going on in California at the time too. It was just havoc going on in our own country. You couldn't point the finger and say, "How do we stop this?" Smart guys are supposed to be doing that for us. We did our thing and went back to Fort Campbell. At that point...I hadn't been in Fort Campbell very long when this all transpired, and my household goods were still packed. We were living in a house -- my family -- we're still packed, because we had been told, "Don't unpack, because you're going to have to move again." I wasn't there a couple of weeks and then I had to redeploy my family while I was getting ready to deploy to Vietnam. I brought them back to Illinois and settled them in Peoria. They were close to her family at the time. And then I went back to Campbell, and we deployed. What we did was we packed...it

was an interesting logistics thing for the time frame. Our brigade, for example, was about 3,000. Some elements went on an advanced party -- early -- to Vietnam. And we had to pack up, so to speak, everything, and get ready for deployment. Put some guys on a ship -- a troop ship -- with some equipment. And we had equipment on airplanes. If I recall the number, we had 5,180 tons of equipment. And about...around 3,500 soldiers deployed from on or about October to December, 1967 timeframe. From Fort Campbell, Kentucky to the Republic of Vietnam. Got settled in a base camp. Our brigade replaced elements of the 1st Infantry Division. That was located in Phuoc Vinh, about forty-five miles north of Bien Hoa in a small base camp. We moved in, superimposed ourselves in their space, and they moved to another location.

Clarke: Before we get deeper into your Vietnam story, when in this story that you've told did you meet your wife?

Ruggerio: Back in Germany.

Clarke: So you met your wife in Germany.

Ruggerio: Yes. former wife.

Clarke: Your former wife.

Ruggerio: Yes. I met her in Germany. She was a DoD school teacher, who taught school in Fulda. Deployed from Peoria. [Laughs]. I think they had a requirement, they had to have a minimum of X number of years' experience under their belt before they became a Department of Defense school teacher. So we had a physical school right in Fulda. The high school, of course, was miles away, in Frankfurt. Those kids who went to high school actually boarded there. My wife was [in Fulda], we met, we dated for a while. She redeployed back to the States, and then I came home. Subsequently, we were married. We then went back to Germany for our fourth years.

Clarke: So basically a military couple, in a way. You both were living the life, through DoD or directly in the military. That's very interesting

Ruggerio: Many, many school teachers were collocated in the BOQ space that young lieutenants occupied. So you saw a lot of those marriages transpire. Our officer's club was our place where we ate dinner and stuff, was right there, so we co-mingled, [during a great part of our off time.] We did that, and then each of my children...I had two children born in Fort Knox, I had a third child born after

Vietnam, born in Maine and a fourth child born at Fort Leavenworth. So we went through the thing. But we were talking about the period of time -- that was in Germany when I met my wife -- so that was like '63 or '64 time. We were married in '64. Then we returned back and redeployed there for another year plus and then went back to the States [in 1965].

Clarke: Then you went over to Vietnam. Again.

Ruggerio: Then we went to Vietnam. No, I only had one tour, it was a [slightly] longer tour. I deployed in November of '67, to Vietnam. After the Detroit thing we went back to Campbell and then went to Vietnam.

Clarke: Okay, I've got it, I'm with you.

Ruggerio: I wasn't there [Vietnam] thirty days when the Tet offensive hit. That's when we -- we meaning the 101st -- were super active. [Our brigade was] called to go in and help bail out the American embassy in Saigon, which had a hole blown in the front of the building. Our troops actually deployed to the roof of the American embassy, and worked our way through the building chasing out the VC that had attacked it at that time. That was our first real encounter, we'd had some small skirmishes prior to that as baptism, but the Tet offensive was really the 3rd Brigade's first baptism. And then we...as I was working with my boss, sitting outside his door so to speak, I put together a pretty good staff of folks to do certain things. Particularly of interest would be -- to the Pritzker Library -- would be the...I had one young man who hand scribed the daily journal for that brigade. All the activity that transpired, every combat situation. That's what this young fellow did. He was a calligrapher, too. And he did it, log book after log book, he did that thing. We had, like I said, a team of people who were really a cross-section of America. They were great. I had one young fellow who was a combat photographer, Silver Star awardee, subsequently passed away of leukemia shortly after we came home.

Clarke: What was his name?

Ruggerio: [Dean Phillips]

Clarke: Was he DASPO? Department of the Army Special Photographic Office?

Ruggerio: No, he was a member of the 101st.

Clarke: Oh, he was a member of the 101st? Okay. I feel like I've heard a story about him, but anyways, go ahead.

Ruggerio: Very articulate. He was an attorney by trade. Young man, Phillips. Dean Phillips was his name. Just a sharp young guy. We made sure he was well taken care of because of what he did. He did some great things. Anyway, we kept...my boss called me in the office one day and said, "You know, I told you I'd take care of you. And I just wanted to remind you that don't worry about it. You'll get to see your action." I said, "My goal is to see some activity here. I don't want to be a 'chairborne' soldier, you know?" So he said...that evening at the staff meeting, he says, "My guy, my assistant, is going to be taken care of so don't be asking me questions." He's telling all the staff this, because they all knew that I wanted to get out there, in the jungle. Well, five o'clock the next morning, the duty officer comes and wakes me up in my little hooch and says, "The old man wants to see you in his trailer right now." I said, "What the hell happened?" It's five o'clock in the morning and I've just gotten there, I've just got to Vietnam, you know? And he's, "Oh I just wanted," he's sitting on the edge of his bunk, puffing on a little Erik cigar, at five o'clock in the morning, and he said, "I just wanted to let you know," he looks down, "Effective today you're the S1." I said, "What? What happened to Major Wheaton?" He said, "I fired his ass." [Laughs]. I said, "What?" and he said, "That's all you need to know. I fired his ass, and today you're the guy. You clean up that mess and then we'll talk." So I took...the major never showed up, you know, he wasn't there. He was redeployed to some off the wall job someplace. So I started doing what I'm supposed to do and taking care of him, and I pretty well knew his idiosyncrasies at that point from my Fort Campbell days, we got to know each other very well, very quickly. His likes and his dislikes, I made sure, and, well, it was probably two weeks after that he was at a staff meeting one day, and he said, "Well, my S1 has been bugging me for jungle time. I'm compromising. And effective today, he's going to be the LRRP platoon leader, but he's not gonna give up his S1 job." So I took over the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol for a short period of time, went out on a couple of missions. The bulk of these guys were great soldiers, but they were guys who had a little controversy about them. For lack of a better description, you could call them the 'dirty dozen.' But they were good kids, and they worked hard, and we did that. We went out on special patrols, not so much to...reconnaissance in force type things. But they did encounter a number of enemy engagements that they took care of. Just interesting, interesting young men that were a conglomerate of those who were collected from different units within the brigade who had some issues of sorts. And put them together. There were a number of us who had an opportunity to be LRRP platoon leaders for short periods of time, just to get us out there and work on our combat infantryman's

badge...the requirement was thirty days under hostile fire in order to qualify to be a recipient. So I acquired my thirty days, partially as a LRRP guy, and then subsequently as a scout dog guy. I took on that as well. But I never gave up my S1 job.

Clarke: You were doing both.

Ruggerio: I did them both. We had...just great people. And these scout dogs proved themselves beyond reproach. We had scout dogs and we had sentry dogs -- all of them were shepherds -- but they were trained to do different things. The scout dogs were detecting mines, they could detect the enemy, they could detect anything. They were very good.

Clarke: And you were out there with them.

Ruggerio: Yeah, we were out there with them. Then I also worked the jungle with a couple of company commanders who were seasoned veterans -- some of them were multiple tours as company commanders -- infantry guys. Would take me out with them, combat missions. One time we got out there...we were out there for, it was supposed to be two weeks. I wish I could remember that young guy's name, he was a seasoned company commander, I was right on him. Right with him. And he said, "We're supposed to go out for two weeks and find whatever we can. Any caches that the Vietcong have stashed." They used to stash their rice and their nuoc mam -- which was their oil and fish stepl they would throw over their rice -- and it would stink like 30 weight motor oil, and they would eat that stuff. But he said, "We're gonna go out and recon, and they're gonna send helicopters in a couple weeks for us." [Laughs]. Well, the helicopters never showed, they were off doing other missions. The operations guy told us, "You're only about eight kilometers, walk back." So we walked back through the jungle. And I've got to tell you, that was a feat. Because there were a lot of booby traps. His soldiers were such well-qualified guys that they could detect these things and disarm 'em. So we made a path. But this company commander took me under his wing and he said, "Come on, we're going to do what we have to do." We encountered some skirmishes en route, over the eight kilometer period, but we had to work our way back into our base camp. It was interesting. Fortunately for me, those guys who were battalion commanders, for this Colonel Mowery, were guys who all went on to become super general officers. General David Grange...Lieutenant General David Grange, whose son was formerly the head of the McCormick Foundation...his dad, this Dave Grange Jr., was a Lieutenant in the 2nd of 506 in Vietnam during the same era when his dad was a commander. And then there

was a guy named John Forrest, who subsequently had passed away, I worked for him again in the Pentagon, John Forrest [was a Major General]. So these guys all worked for Mowery, General Julius Becton, African American general, was the brigade XO. General Bob Yerks, former DCSP [Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel] of the Army, was the XO of that brigade. So the Blue Eagle Brigade was made up of some real fighters, you know, some real war guys, war heroes. I'll tell another side funny story about General Yerks. He was a lieutenant colonel at that time, as the brigade exec, getting ready to redeploy home, and he said to me one day, "Can you get this to the local tailor or something and fix a uniform up for me, when I go home?" So I took my driver and we went into the village, and explained to the tailor that we wanted a screaming eagle patch put on the shoulder, and we wanted the uniform, [clean and pressed]. So they took his green military dress uniform, you know, rice starched it, washed it starched it, and put a screaming eagle patch on his sleeve. What they thought was...but they put a comb on the eagle, so it looked like a rooster. [Laughs]. And I said, "This is the uniform you're gonna go home it," he said, "No, no, no!" So we had to go all the way to Saigon, to a warehouse, dispatch a helicopter to go down there to get him a uniform so he could go home. That was one of the funny things. The other thing, we had, because we sat on the edge of Warzone C, in Phuoc Vinh, we were deployed to several locations. We went to OpCon, the Operational Control to the 25th division over to the Cu Chi, Trang Bang area, and then there was the Black Virgin Mountain...there were several battles over in that area that 101st went over and supplemented. Just supplemented those guys. Then finally, as part of the thing we -- the 173rd Airborne Brigade -- which was up north in the Dak To, Dak Pek, they'd had a hell of a battle and needed some help. So they redeployed the 3rd Brigade up in that area, we went to Dak To, Dak Pek and then we went up to Camp Evans. That's where...when I left, some 13 months later, I was at Camp Evans at that time. Two weeks after I left, the new brigade commander, who had been there three or four months at that point, was severely wounded at the battle of Hamburger Hill. That was two weeks after I departed Vietnam. We just had so many activities going on. One of the fiercest fights we had was in March of 1968. Our basecamp was just mortared for 24 hours. We didn't move out of bunkers, so to speak. Simultaneously, it was...the 3rd Battalion 187 had some troops deployed in and around the area. I can't remember the exact spot they were located. But there was a severe battle, Captain Bud Bucha was the commander of his company at that time. And they encountered severe casualties, and they also had the dogs alerted some of their elements, so they were...Bud worked very, very hard at that particular time. I

have to say I was instrumental in putting together his documentation for his Congressional Medal of Honor. I'm very proud to have said to have contributed to that. He earned every inch of that. That medal that he wears around his neck and that medal. He did a great job with that unit. Vietnam was an experience...from my perspective, I thought those soldiers were some of the finest people I have ever encountered. Both from a personal standpoint and a professional standpoint. Just from a human factor. When you get a cross-section of folks like that, you don't know what to expect. But the cohesion...things came together because prior to the deployment of that organization, they were just building the team to go. Some of these people didn't know one another or didn't know their capabilities or anything, they were just put together. There were a lot of casualties as well, during that year. I feel very blessed. I saw a number of folks die, unfortunately. It just is...you just never forget that kind of stuff. Helicopters crashing and things of that nature. But there were good points as well, funny points. Funny things that occurred each night. One for example, we always set up in the courtyard of our compound, we had a little pedestal. So when a blue eagle came back, if he wanted to watch a movie with the troops, the troops were all here, and we had a chair like this sitting on top of a little pedestal. And March, Saint Paddy's day of '68, he was off doing something, and wasn't there. And there was a movie and we started hearing, phew phew phew, uh oh, incoming, so everybody scattered to the bunkers -- the movie was still going -- scattered to the bunkers, because when you hear incoming...lo and behold, a mortar hit right in the middle of his chair, just decimated that chair. Thank God, he wasn't there. I said, "The Big Brother is always watching you." We also had a division commander, notorious, his name was Olinto M. Barsanti, Major General, tough as nails. Tough as nails. He would call you on the carpet for anything. He'd see an MP report, in Vietnam particularly, he'd watch the MP reports...if a jeep was pulled over doing something it shouldn't have been doing, somebody in the jeep. He'd say, "Transfer to the front lines". Put it on the police blotter, "Transfer to the front lines," If we had a jeep doing something, or out of the realms where it was supposed to be, transferred to the front lines. He would call...and one day, there was a B-52 strike in our general area. And every photograph in the headquarters building that was mounted on the wall fell off the wall except his, in the entire building. I said, that tells you what General Barsanti was all about. He was a different guy, let me tell you. He was subsequently followed in the position of division commander by Melvin Zais, a great general. Great leader, great general. Another guy who taught a lot of the things to young guys, I considered myself a young guy. I was fortunate, I was promoted to Major before

I redeployed back to the States, but he just was one of those gentleman warriors. He would come to visit and he would sit with us young officers and young soldiers, just sit and philosophize about what was going on -- why we were there -- you hear that stuff that was going on back in the States...students for democratic society, people burning draft cards, people protesting. You hear all of that stuff. There were some elements of the soldiers...you always read about some elements of the soldiers who were druggies just like people back in the states. Yeah, that element existed in certain organizations, but for the most part those were minimal [in our units] from my perspective. I saw very little of that in the elements of the 101st. That's not to say it wasn't there, but I saw very little of it. But you would hear all of this stuff, and people say, "Well, how did you feel when you came back home?" Well, when I got to come back to the States, at the end of my deployment, that was a time that people were either getting out, or frustrated or fed up, that's a term I don't like to use but I'll use it to describe my perception of people's feelings at the time. A lot of guys that I know did get out, captains and majors, young majors. Maybe that was the seven to ten year mark in their career, so there were a lot of people pulling the plug, so to speak. The Army, and I'm sure other services do, we put out some incentives to try and keep you. In my case, they said, "We're gonna give you an ROTC assignment, and you're gonna go to grad school when you're there." So that was the carrot for me.

Clarke: That's how they kept you.

Ruggerio: They kept me. In retrospect I have no regrets.

Clarke: Let me ask you a question about your 13 months in Vietnam...and how are you doing as far as everything? Because I'll probably have to take a break here in a second.

Ruggerio: Good. I'll do it when you do it.

Clarke: When you reflect back on your Vietnam time, I'm curious to know what you guys talked about when you talked about the enemy. Because you were always thinking about the enemy every day, it's what you did, especially when you were out on those long range patrol with the dogs. So I'm curious to know about your perspectives on the enemy you were fighting, and what your thoughts on what they were fighting for as well...it always takes two sides, right? And I'm also curious to know...you mentioned the great teaching generals you've had, and people who've taken you under their wing, is there a specific wisdom that you

could share that you remember learning while you were in Vietnam, that 13 month period? I'm particularly interested...you were sitting around philosophizing with that one particular general.

Ruggerio: General Zais. General Zais was one of those people who would explain the realities of life, you know. Regardless of what the political situation was back in Podunk, or back in the States, or back in Boston, or back wherever. He was a New England guy by demographics...by birth, I think. He would just talk about, "We're here, we have a mission to do, you know. We may not like all of the yes's and no's that we're hearing, but we're here to do a job, you know?" Some people were upset because, if we were given a mission to go into village A or village B, and given the maps and things that we were going to go into village A and village B, and...people in the United States had no idea what village A and village B were all about. We're here on the ground, we see some of the natives, what they're going through, for example. We would go in and win their hearts and minds by giving them things that they didn't have, rice or food or water or something. Medical. Our medics did a great job working with the people. It's fine today. Tonight, while we're gone, the VC would come in and do the same sort of thing. So tomorrow if we go back, they may shoot at us. So that was a difficult thing. And he would try to transpose the VC philosophy, and said, "Okay, our job is to win them over to the point where they're not gonna shoot at us. And we're going to do good things to help bring this country back to some sort of a format that everyone is copacetic and happy and getting along. Keep the enemy away, because, what were they fighting for?" We're not sure what they were fighting for. You know, in their hearts and minds. They were told to do things and they did them. I don't know if they knew there was a philosophy behind their reality, or what they were doing. They weren't looking to gain more territory, so to speak, I mean they were trying to beat us because they thought we were infringing on their arena. Zais was one of those guys who was trying to put you on a level plane. The playing field is here, we have a force that is trying to do things to this country's population, and our job is to mend that way so that these people can live their normal way of life of farming or manufacturing -- not manufacturing, but producing rice, I should say -- and things like that. And he was just one of those guys who would just take the tension out of thought process and what you hear. We heard more things via letter than you did news, because the Stars and Stripes was the only news media we really had over there. Weren't really putting the bad mouth on what was going on over here. If you got a letter from home and it said, 'they're protesting you guys being there.' Some guys who went home and then subsequently came back, would tell, you know,

“Wow, this is nasty.” but when I came home from Vietnam and I arrived in Chicago, and I was in uniform, I was treated like I was a king. During that time frame, that was very unusual. I was trying to catch an airplane to Peoria, and all the flights were booked because it was the holiday weekend, and Ozark Air Lines put on a special flight. Added me and some other lady to a special flight, because I was a Vietnam vet, and that was very unusual for that particular time. I never encountered any controversy until several years later. I mean, even I saw some of the Students for Democratic Society perform on the college campus when I was teaching ROTC...but that wasn't a local element, that was an element that was imported from the Boston area, I was up in the University of Maine. The only wisdom that I really could say that I got, I got from General Zais and I got from my brigade commander, who knew that we had a job to do and we were there to do this job. We weren't gonna ease off of it, and none of the troops were going to ease off of it. And because we had a cross-section of America, I think that thought process was pretty prevalent, I really do. There may be guys you talk to today who are Vietnam vets who may think otherwise. Most of the guys that I deal with who are Vietnam vets, in my motorcycle group, pretty much have the same thought process. I do think that it was pretty much forthcoming by this general. A lot of the battalion commanders at the time were smart guys, and I thought they were teaching the same sort of thing. We had the incidents like the My Lai incident, you know, those things that would taint the troop business in the combat situation, because that would do that anywhere not just there, you know. I don't know if that answers...

Clarke: No, it does. I'm just kind of curious about that. Let's take a quick break.

Ruggerio: I liked that one question, you said...one of the interviewees said along the lines of, Vietnam was 90% pure boredom, and 10% pure terror.

Clarke: Yeah.

Ruggerio: I didn't think that at all. Even the soldiers who were combatants on the day to day basis, every so often were pulled back. We had, for lack of a better description, we had [special services gals, civilian volunteers who had a program to deploy and help with programs for the troops] Some...called them donut dollies, [but they were great ladies.] Had a little club and they would go to the field and they would bring letter writing stuff to the soldiers, they would bring snacks and donuts and coffee and soft drinks. When the troops came back to the base camp area, they could go the service club and play pool or play ping pong and do things like that. So I don't...this boredom thing, maybe there were just

guys who were stuck in the jungle for the whole twelve months or thirteen months. I don't know that that really occurred, [anywhere].. It may have, but unbeknownst to me. It didn't happen in the 101st Airborne. My thoughts on the enemy, I thought the VC were an interesting breed because they could do with very little, and do well with very little. Their success rate. They had underground hospitals, they created that and they were inventive. They would make do with what little things. They would take old tires and make their sandals out of old tire; they would cut them up and make sandals out of them. They would wear them with very little. Their uniforms were sparse. Now, the NVA were more rigid. But I think those were quote 'the professional soldiers' and I would call the VC maybe the militias, for lack of a proper description. The interesting thing about the VC and the NVA, was neither one of them would engage the South Koreans. If we...I used to tell folks, when we were out there and we had Koreans on either flank, I slept well. Because the VC and the NVA would not engage them. They wouldn't engage them.

Clarke: Do you know why?

Ruggerio: I believe because they [Koreans] were fierce fighters, and they knew they were fierce fighters. South Koreans are, no questions. And I learned that years later when I was in Korea.

Clarke: So not so much hearts and minds, more of a...

Ruggerio: Oh yes. We were more hearts and minds, as best we could, you know. Except for instances like the My Lai situation, or something like that. But, our civic activity was a lot stronger than the Koreans was, that's for sure. They were sneaking peepers, they worked hard for what they came for. We had a big...on our tactical operations center, we had a big antenna. And of course, as an airborne soldier, we had a sign that said, "Ho Chi Minh is a leg" -- meaning he's not airborne so he's worthless. That was a big sign on top of the antenna.

Clarke: Let me ask you a little bit about...let's go into, before we go into your post-Vietnam military career, let's go into a little bit more on Vietnam.

Ruggerio: Okay.

Clarke: We've talked a little bit about the wisdom of leaders, you shared with me a little bit about your perspectives on the enemy you encountered when you were over there. You mentioned you were with the dog scout unit. That's not every day

that everybody gets to work with animals, when out in a combat zone. So what was that like for you?

Ruggerio: The interesting part about it, first of all...these shepherds were well trained scout dogs before I even became encountered with them. The only time I had a dog, a personal dog with me, I pulled it once the trainer and the dog just didn't mesh for some reason. So the trainer went elsewhere, and they didn't have a trainer for the dog, or a soldier for the dog. So I kept the dog with me. When they went out on patrol, the soldier had to carry three or four canteens of water just for the dogs. The unfortunate part was none of those dogs ever came home, they all stayed in-country. Back then they didn't do what they do today, unfortunately. Dogs were trained in this instance, they were scouts. So they could detect almost anything. They knew, for example, if a cache of rice was out there and was booby trapped. The dog, via smell or whatever, it could detect a booby trap before somebody would trip it. The soldiers who were working the dogs on a day to day basis, they were partners. They slept together, they ate together, they did everything together. Just like two soldiers in a foxhole, so to speak. They were inseparable. And there were times when...where the dog was wounded or the soldier was wounded, the dog went with him or the soldier went with him. They were kept together as long as they could. In this case when I had the dog, they just didn't mesh, so the trainer -- the soldier -- went someplace else., The dogs were very instrumental in Bud Bucha's battle. They gave them early warning, so he was able to determine where the enemy was and who they were. Interesting facet, because to me, that was a whole new situation. Once the soldier and the dog mesh, one knows the other's idiosyncrasies, just like you and I were sitting here and we knew each other for 50 years -- I know what you're like, and the soldiers did that too. They were with the dog before they came, they were put together in training [and underwent the same training as a team.]

Clarke: If you were to try to describe to a civilian, what being in combat was like during Vietnam, in one of those skirmishes or something like that or the battles that you were in, what would you describe that as?

Ruggerio: Well, somebody asked me that one day. I went out on an air assault with a company commander and his company one day. We landed at a landing zone that was hot, and there was snipers shooting. My description was, he pulled us over to the side of the landing zone to collect as thoughts, and I sat down on a red ant hill to see where the hell I was, because [upon exiting the chopper, you] would run to the side of the landing zone. And the pucker factor was there.

Anybody who says they weren't scared, I kinda question that. When you are encountering sniper fire and don't know where it comes from, I would suspect that...I was scared. My pucker factor was up, so to speak. This guy was calm, cool, because he'd been a vet from the 1st Cav in his previous tour...as a company commander. He took me under his wing, and we started our encounter on foot patrol. He had his point man out and everything else, and I was in line with the point man. All of a sudden, I see the point guy up front take a 90 degree turn to the right, went down about 40 or 50 meters and did a 90 degree turn to the left. So the company commander ran up and said, "What's going on?" and he pointed over there and the elephant grass was doing one of these. There was a big old python slithering through [the grasses], walking its way through. And I said, "Besides those snipers...that's another reason my pucker factor was up." You know, "Ain't no question about it, this old boy was a big dude. He could have had all of us for lunch and we would have never been found. So, yeah. I say, once you're in control and know...for example once I knew where the sniper fire was coming from, our job was to figure out a way to eliminate it. Your pucker factor comes under control. But initially, when you don't see it or don't know it, no question I was scared. What am I gonna do, you know?"

Clarke: Yeah. All alerts.

Ruggerio: Oh here's another one, "What were the opportunities for R&R." When we were in-country, we made sure that the soldiers got their R&R because they worked so hard every day. Walking through the rice paddies and beating the bush. There were times, you and I could be in the bush together, this close together, and not see each other. Because of the thickness of the...we tell people that once they dropped Agent Orange, 72 hours later there was no greenery whatsoever. So soldiers that were in that environment had to get out of there. You couldn't do that day in and day out for 12 months a year. So they got R&R. At least 5 days out-of-country. Then we would try to give some of the soldiers long weekends at some of the local R&R centers. We had one in Vung Tau, which was south, on the beaches. We made sure soldiers were sent there. We kept track of who got it and who didn't get it, because those who didn't get it, didn't get it for a specific reason. It wasn't because they weren't entitled to it, they just had other non-judicial reasons, or judicial reasons why they didn't get it.

Clarke: So let's spend a little bit of time talking about you. You come back to the States, you end up as an ROTC instructor at the University of Maine in Orono, right?

Ruggerio: Orono.

Clarke: Orono, Orono, Maine. And you...you get to go to graduate school as well?

Ruggerio: Yes.

Clarke: So tell me a little bit about that, and that period leading up to...you went over to Korea, right?

Ruggerio: Coming out of Vietnam and transitioning back into a family environment, and into what you and I would call a normal environment. Mine was a little skewed because of the cold weather. Coming out of the jungles of Vietnam in January and going to the University of Maine in Orono is tough on your body. My body took a long time to make that transition, and acquire a warmth. Because I could never get warm. And that year happened to be one of the worst winters Maine had in 25 years. We had snow and cold...anyways, I was put into this ROTC environment. The most interesting part about that was my new boss...coming out of a combat zone and going to a new boss who had no combat experience and really limited troop experience; he'd been a recruiter or previous ROTC, he'd spent his life in that element, even though he was a combat commissioned officer in field artillery. He had very little field artillery experience, very little leadership experience. So it was a difficult transition from that perspective, because I had worked for so many great people, leaders, and I was coming into this weak environment, as I called it. So I tried to build...in my own mind, and some of the colleagues I had who were also combat veterans, fortunately. What we tried to do, we tried to build an ROTC contingent where we were teaching these people all the things we learned going through, particularly coming out of Vietnam. What they needed to know about the effort that was going on over there versus the effort that was going on here in protest. That was my main element. That's one of the reasons why I enrolled in the political science department, I knew that was the area that a lot of the bad stuff was prevalent, coming out of that arena. They needed to know the truth, and they weren't getting the truth because the media doesn't tell the truth. You have to get it firsthand. So that's kinda how I felt when I came back into that environment. And then, getting reacquainted with family, that was tough. You know, when I left for Vietnam, my oldest daughter was three weeks old, and when I came back she was like 14 months. [She probably wondered] who's this strange dude in my house? So it took us a little while to warm up to each other, and then of course my oldest was two at that time. And then we had a third one while we were there. That was a family building time, so to speak. The pressure wasn't there, you could go home and go to sleep at night and not have to worry about keeping

an eye open, kind of environment. It was a different kind of environment, but it was a good time to reacquaint, that's what I called it. And students, I loved the students. Just teaching them. Although the protests in Maine weren't as great as they were in downtown Boston or downtown DC or someplace like that, they were there, but they were imported. I always tell this story, one of my students was Stephen King, he started out as an ROTC student and decided to pursue another route later. But we had a cross-section of students too, smart guys and engineers and non-engineers. At that time, ROTC was not very prone to women, still pre-woman time, probably four or five years before the woman aspect came into play, which I always think was great when it finally did.

Clarke: So you have your reacquainting with family time, and then you are sent to Korea?

Ruggerio: No, I was staying at grad school, and then from there I went to the Command and General Staff College, and then from the Command and General staff College -- which is a year -- I went from there to Fort Hood, Texas. Back into cavalry officer, I was getting back into my routine again, my skill set as a cavalry squadron. I went there as the operations officer of the cavalry squadron, and we did a lot of training again, more and more training. This was the time that the Army, in its infinite wisdom, created the modern volunteer Army called VOLAR. What was VOLAR all about, new buildings -- new dormitory type buildings for soldiers -- longer hair for soldiers. A lot more drugs, more prevalent among the soldiers, more freedom of action, as I would say, for a soldier than I was used to from the old regime, you know. We had draftees prior, and draftees were good soldiers for the most part, knew what they were doing. This modern volunteer Army didn't know what an eight hour day was, and wasn't sure they wanted to know what an eight hour day was. That was a transition again, for old soldiers coming in -- at that particular time, I was still a Major. But anyway, we worked at the cavalry squadron. We trained hard and long, we did a lot of things. We ran night training programs, we did some different things there. Just worked hard. Eight to five job and then we would train for two weeks in the field, field training exercises. Planning this and planning that, and then we had gunnery sessions. Just a normal training routine [for a cavalry squadron]. We did that for two years. And then I got tapped, I was on my way to the French language school in Monterey, California for a year to study French and then go to Cambodia as a...the term I want to use is 'advisor,' of sorts, words in quotes. Shortly after, the curtain came down in Vietnam, '75. And my orders were changed en route, and I was sent to Washington. I then went to Washington where I worked in the

Deputy Chief of Staff of Personnel, I worked for General Hal Moore from, 'when we were soldiers.' I worked for General Moore in Washington, another great soldier.

Clarke: What was he like?

Ruggerio: Absolutely spectacular soldier. Everybody knows his story, there were several soldiers who I worked with in the Pentagon who had worked for him in Vietnam. He was just a gentleman, diplomat, leader, precise. I was then a...let's see, I worked there as a major and got promoted to a lieutenant colonel at that time. He was just...you knew he was a combat warrior because of his stature. When he talked to you, he'd look at you. And he knew what he was talking about. He knew his business. I think, as a personnel guy, as they always say, "Going to the Pentagon is doing your penance." As a personnel guy, I would say General Moore was doing his penance, because he was a warrior. He needed to be with troops. He did philosophize, so you knew what his leadership traits were. You knew you had a job and you would do it well for General Moore because General Moore was a leader. You would do it for him, you wanted to do it for him. Yeah, I enjoyed working for him...yeah, for three years.

Clarke: Did he tell you anything ever that you take with you to this day?

Ruggerio: Yeah, take care of your soldiers. He, amongst others, had that same philosophy. Make sure you take care of your soldiers and they'll take care of you. I've used that for years, and throughout my career. I feel I'm one of the fortunate guys, because not everyone can say they've commanded soldiers from the grade of lieutenant through colonel. And I have. I've always taken care of my soldiers. And I've always told people, you know what? My success in the military isn't necessarily because of me, it's because I'm smart enough to surround myself with great soldiers. I've always used that as my edict. I have always had great soldiers.

Clarke: So what's working in the Pentagon during this era like?

Ruggerio: Tough.

Clarke: I mean, you're doing some kind of rebuild here, right? Right, there's a lot of going on in the military in general, and in the Army in particular.

Ruggerio: When I went to work for General Moore, there were so many soldiers in the military outside their skillsets because of filling holes. I called it filling holes.

Because so many soldiers were 'fighting the battle,' we didn't have, necessarily, the trained cooking. We may have had that trained cook employed at maintenance guy in the motor pool. And he shouldn't be, he should be cooking, because that's what he's trained to do. So my job at the Pentagon was MOS mismatch; that was my title. I was responsible to ensure that soldiers who were trained in a skill were being utilized in that skill. My job was to circumvent the entire [Army] looking at units, and unit breakdowns by soldier. You talk about counting the pennies, I was looking at pennies to make sure that penny was in a penny roll and not in a dime roll. I did that for almost three years...we produced movies for soldiers to look at and banners to look at, knowing they had to utilize those soldiers in their proper skills. Then came my lucky break. Had a friend working in Korea, as an executive officer for the CINC, Commander in Chief of the Far East. He told me, "General Vessey is going to need an XO. What do you think of that?" I said, "I don't know General Vessey." "General Vessey is coming to town, he wants to interview you." Okay. Vessey came to town, I sat with him in an interview process like you and I are sitting here today. He did most of the talking, and then he let me talk. He told me a little bit about what the job was and what he was looking for and that kind of stuff. This was like, March of 1975. No, March of '78, [Time passed], I didn't hear a thing. In the meantime, I was offered another position for another great officer, General Dick Lawrence, who was my brigade commander when I was in [the 1st] Cav at Fort Hood. He was another guy who says, "You do something for me and this is what you have to do," and you want to do it for him because of who he is and how he leads, how he treats soldiers; fair firm and to the point, that's the way. He offered me a job in the Pentagon in his group, which was Tank Force modernization. That was making the transition to the M1 tank from the M60 series. That sounded pretty exciting. He offered me a job, I was getting ready to move. This was like, end of May, first part of June of '78. Move out of General Moore's shop, down to General Lawrence's shop. That was on a Friday, move in on Monday. Friday night I get a call from General Vessey, "I want you." Okay, so I went home and talked to the family about that. Monday morning I went to talk to General Lawrence about that. Lawrence says, "You have to go to Korea, you've got to do it. This job will always be here, but you got to go to Korea, that's a once in a lifetime." And it sounded exciting to me. My family made a family decision, okay, we're going to Korea because it was a family assignment; it wasn't just for me. So Monday I made that decision, we were going to Korea. I had a week to get ready. We took care of the family, they stayed back for a couple of months and took care of the paperwork for passports, with General Vessey's help. And I went to Korea. I've

got to tell you, of all of the people I've ever worked for in my life, he's the number one guy.

Clarke: Vessey? Why's that

Ruggerio: No question. Soldier, diplomat, statesman, leader, you want to do what...General Vessey can ask you to fly to the moon, you're gonna fly to the moon. If he says jump off that bridge because, you're gonna jump off that bridge because. That's the way he was. I could see why General Vessey went from an enlisted soldier in the Minnesota National Guard, underage, in 1939. Commissioned at the battle of Anzio in WWII, some forty-six or seven years later becoming the chairman of the joint chiefs under Ronald Reagan. I can see why. Sit in a room with him for two minutes and you'll know. And he was just that great. He made me a global person. I always tell my kids, my soldiers: in this world today, when you're in the military environment, you've got to be global, you've got to know what's going on. And General Vessey made me global. In a short period of time. Again, a set of apron strings to tag onto, he was the right guy for me at the right time. I felt very fortunate and blessed to be selected, because he could have selected any other lieutenant colonel that he wanted. He was a handball player, I was not a handball player. When he mentioned that in the interview I figured, "Hell, I'm gone."

Clarke: Did you acquire this?

Ruggerio: No, didn't have to. I just made sure he had handball players to play with. I stayed with him fourteen months, and then I stayed with his replacement, General John Wickham, stayed with John Wickham eight weeks during the transition, selecting a replacement for me. And then I went up to the DMZ and took command of the 1st Battalion, 72nd Armored Tank Battalion. I commanded that for about 14 months.

Clarke: What's it like commanding a tank battalion on the DMZ in Korea?

Ruggerio: During that time? Spectacular. First of all, because of my position in Seoul for 14 months before I went to the DMZ, I got to know Korea very, very well. I got to know who the players were, what North Korea was all about, I got to know what the DMZ was all about, how that worked, how the people, the representatives that Panmunjom operated, because they worked for General Vessey. So I got to know all of that. So when I went up to command the battalion, they were in dire straits, because the equipment was M60 tanks, and where the motor pool was located, you had to cross a river to go in and out of the motor pool. Well over a

period of time, they had significant problems with wheels and bearings in tanks. They had a 54% deadline rate on their tanks in that battalion. So I whispered little sweet nothings in General Vessey's ear, said, "We've got to fix that." We were able to acquire some help from Anniston Army Depot, we took all of those decrepit M60 tanks out-of-country. We brought in M48A5s, which were refurbished 48 tanks with M60 tank gun capability, 105mm tank gun. All new tanks. So I had a fresh start as the battalion commander. However, when I assumed command I didn't realize that thirty days later Park Chung-Hee, President of South Korea [was going to be assassinated]. My battalion deployed immediately, as we all did, out to our wartime positions, because we thought all hell was going to break loose. Unbeknownst to us, there was an inside coup at the time, but subsequently we stayed deployed for better than a month. That was my baptism in battalion command in] Korea.

Clarke: For the first time on the DMZ, all that stuff. You're probably thinking to yourself, hmm this is kind of like Germany.

Ruggerio: Kinda like Germany. I had a battalion of soldiers who weren't used to making mistakes. They weren't allowed...their previous command posture was such that they couldn't make mistakes, weren't allowed to make mistakes. When you put that monkey on a bunch of soldiers' backs, they're afraid to do anything. We changed that very quickly. I said, "My philosophy was, you can make a mistake. Try not to make a mistake that is going to kill, maim, or destroy, and try not to make the same mistake a second time. Learn from that mistake." So, young lieutenants were able to do that. We were able to come up with a cohesive group, and there's probably...I'm not saying I'm the only battalion commander that has this luxury, but every two years -- that group that I was fortunate enough to command -- we get together every two years for a reunion.

Clarke: I was just gonna ask you, you've been talking about all these great people that taught you and led you and kinda showed you the way, from Hal Moore to Vessey to all those guys. Who are the people that looked to you like this? Who are the people that you were advising, that you helped?

Ruggerio: One of the most recent encounters, who I think looks up to me a little bit, is retired four-star General B.B. Bell, he was my S3 when I was a battalion commander, he was a captain at that time. My division commander was General Bob Kingston, great guy too, another great soldier. But he used to say to me, you need to have a major, you need to have a major! And I'd say, "No, no!" and I could yell back at him because he was General Vessey's chief of staff when I was

his XO. He owed me some favors, as a general. So I'd say, "No, I don't want him [a major], he's doing a great job." and he allowed me to keep General Bell as a captain. I've got a bunch of...all these captains and retired generals, four-star General Tom Hill. He worked for me as a captain. Rick Sanchez, who was the scapegoat in the Iraqi situation as a three-star, he worked for me as a young captain. So I had some smart general officers that worked for me, and I think...I'd like to think they would say that I taught them some good things. In fact, when I left battalion command, I have a little plaque that was presented to me by my soldiers with a few of my quotes. I would say to them, "You're barely adequate when sober," this is when I'm writing your efficiency report, I'd say, "You're barely adequate when sober, you have a difficult time maintaining the low standards you set for yourself," and I said, "You're peeing up a rope." So, things like that – [all in fun].

Clarke: These are on your plaque?

Ruggerio: Yeah, these are on my plaque. At our reunions, they continue to remind me of certain things. We do this every two years, I have the same venue of soldiers, I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to serve with these guys.

Clarke: That's pretty cool.

Ruggerio: So some of...even the officers and my enlisted soldiers. When I was a brigade commander, subsequent to my battalion command, I had the Army's largest tank training brigade at Fort Knox, Kentucky. It was the only unionized brigade, we had 1000 civilian unionized maintenance workers. 360 M1A1 tanks. The interesting part about that was, I would run with the soldiers every morning, a different battalion. I would eat with a different table full of soldiers, unannounced every morning, without their leadership, I'd sit there and listen to them. And every one of them that had a question, I may or not have given them the answer they were looking for, but I always got them an answer. If I didn't know the answer, I would get back to them. I did that every day for two years. As a brigade commander, I had great rapport with the soldiers. Interesting, because I could go back to the early German days and talk about soldiers that had some issues, I remember one day we had one soldier who was facing some punishment, he was out in front of the regimental headquarters trimming grass around the flagpole, and the regimental commander came out and said, "How you doing today, young soldier?" And he looked up at him and said, "I've been meaning to talk to you." Of course the rest is history, the whole chain of

command had to go up and visit with this regimental commander. That was funny, I was a young lieutenant then.

Clarke: That's hilarious. Well, let me ask you a couple other questions that are here, and then give you a chance to talk a little about...I want to hear a little bit more about Norwich and more about Rolling Thunder, but before we get into that, when did your military career officially end? Is that...what happened between Korea and the end of your career when you retired?

Ruggerio: I came back from Korea, I went back to the Pentagon to serve again in Deputy Chief of Staff Personnel. Besides operations -- personnel had become another secondary specialty for me. So I went back to the Pentagon. Unfortunately, thirty days after I go home, after working day in and day out for three plus years in Korea, I took a thirty day leave, and I don't think that that's good for anybody. Unfortunately, I had a massive heart attack, and was hospitalized for a while and was told that I'd have to face a medical board. I said -- not no -- but, "Hell no." Fortunately, I was able to beat the medical board and get on with active duty life. I was subsequently selected to go to the war college. Usually, when you PCS[Permanent Change of Station] in the year you have to wait at least a two year period before you can PCS again, but since I was on the war college list and I'd been selected for the industrial college in Washington, they made an exception and I was able to go the war college. While I was in the war college, I worked on my physical being as well, and since I beat the medical board I started working out and I start walking and I start running and get back into the swing of things, even though I was told I wouldn't be able to do that sort of thing. And then I was asked if I wanted to become a division G-3, which, coming out of the War College, I said -- not yes -- but, "Hell yes." Fortunately, the division commander who tapped me had also been General Vessey's operations guy in Korea as a two-star, General Dick Prillaman. So I said, "I do." So after the war college I went to Fort Hood again, 2nd Armored Division, as the G-3. By the time I got there, Dick Prillaman had been selected to go be a three-star someplace. They had a new division commander, so I reported in not knowing this new division commander, I said, "I would understand if you decide you want to bring your own team in, that's fully within your...it's your prerogative." "Oh no," he said, "You stay." So I stayed as the G-3. The chief of staff for that division was a Norwich Graduate, by the name of Roger MacLeod, who I could say was another of those great colonels I worked for. I worked for Colonel Mowery in Vietnam, and then I worked for Roger MacLeod at Fort Hood, Texas. General Woodmansee was the division commander, gave me the shot to be the G-3, I did

the G-3's job for 22 months, had a great team of people, great staff to work with. We had a successful division. We implemented night training, reverse cycle training. I went all over the world preaching the night training thing. We had done it in Korea, we did it in the 2nd Armored Division; we just had a successful run with that thing. We became the night fighters for the United States Army, the 2nd Armored Division. We had a great time with that job. Then, while I was ther G3, again, my great assignment guy in Washington called me and said, "Hey, you remember me?" I said "Of course, I remember you, you've been around a long time." He said, "What do you know about inaugurations?" I said, "I believe we have one every four years." He said, "You're about to be educated." The Army has executive agent responsibility for all ceremonies in the military district of Washington, and, lo and behold, I got tapped to be the chief of staff of the armed forces inaugural committee for Ronald Reagan's second inaugural. There were some good points and some bad points. Since it was his second inaugural, there was no requirement for a transition team. So once the election was over -- I went in a year in advance -- I was given a room probably about this size with eight footlockers, and was told, "These are all the after action reports from previous inaugurations. Put together a team." I had carte blanche to all services. We came up with a little headquarters building outside the Pentagon, so that was good, we put a team together, I opened the footlockers, and those things only told me what people wanted me to read, you know, they didn't tell me all the nooks and crannies that needed to be covered. We started working on it and we put together a team. At the eleven month mark was when the election took place, [the Whtie Hous] sent 500 people over and we continued to pursue this thing. It was probably the coldest inaugural in the history of the United States. 8:30 the evening before Mr. Reagan said to us, "It's time to make a decision," and we moved the parade indoors, instead of being an outdoor parade. The old Capital Center in Landover, Maryland, ws selected, we opened the doors of that thing and implemented our contingency, and we moved [the parade] indoors because it was so cold. At the eleventh hour we had to add a couple of extra military, or inaugural balls, which we were able to do, and just put together the thing. Now, after the inaugural was over, we had about 50 people for about three months, maybe four months. And we wrote the "how to" manual, because there was not one that you could take off t he shelf and say this is how you conduct an inaugural. There were certain talented people in and around the military district we called on, but it was a trying time because the weather was bad...Mr. Gaddafi, at that time, had threatened to kamikaze an aircraft into the swearing-in ceremony. We had several contingencies, we had a lot of security,

we welded every manhole cover on the parade route closed, but we didn't have to use that route because of the cold weather. The inaugural stand was a nice facade to look at, but we didn't need it because we went to Capital Center. It was a very exciting time, met some interesting people. Frank Sinatra was the director of the Gala for that particular inaugural. A lot of stars and celebrities came in. They were all nice to the soldiers and sailors. We had a contingent of all services represented on the inaugural committee. It was just a great program, one of the highlights of my career. So then I went from that job to my brigade job at Knox, and then from my brigade job at Knox I went to the headquarters of the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, and my title was Director of Officer Training. So I was responsible for all officer training.

Clarke: TRADOC? Really

Ruggerio: TRADOC: All schools were under my purview. When it came time for me to retire, I made one suggestion: that they take enlisted schools and officer schools, and call them individual schools. So they combined both those jobs. Another highlight that I was fortunate enough to participate in when I was director of officer training was I had the opportunity to be on a team. We were the first US military team invited to Hungary since before the '56 revolution, and we briefed at the Hungarian military academy. We were there for a couple of months, saw T-72 tanks and saw a lot of stuff, and we were treated like royalty. Very interesting, lot of side stories I could share with you.

Clarke: About being in Hungary? This is...

Ruggerio: About Hungary, yeah, in 1989. We were there when the [East Berlin] wall came down.

Clarke: So you were there, you're in...

Ruggerio: Budapest, when the wall came down. Talk about electricity in Europe.

Clarke: Talk about full circle for you. I mean, you're back, that's pretty cool.

Ruggerio: Full circle. Went from being activated early back in '62 because of the wall, and getting ready to retire when the wall comes down.

Clarke: So you saw the Cold War, basically from beginning to end, in person. Not reading a story.

Ruggerio: Not reading a story.

Clarke: It's just all the way it worked out.

Ruggerio: And seeing how people would say, "Oh, you should hate this guy." You know, the Hungarians really didn't like the Russians, and the Russians were deployed, fully deployed, in Hungary. Well the commandant of the Hungarian Military Academy, in our initial meeting, said to me "We have several Russian officers, students, is it okay if they listen to the briefings?" I said, "By all means." Our briefings weren't anything you and I couldn't read out of an armed forces journal or some magazine. We did our homework and put together great briefings, I briefed on US Army's training, maintaining, and sustaining programs. Okay. Air Force brigadier with me did US Air Force training, maintaining, and sustaining military force. So we did that. It was interesting how, when we got there they'd had a cocktail party for us, all these students were there. This one young guy spoke fluent English. He was a lieutenant in the Russian Army. His father was the ambassador from Russia to Australia. This guy was pretty fluent. We were just joking around and having a drink and eating some nibbles, and oh, he said, "You Americans are very funny. You use jargon a lot." I said, "Oh, you know the term jargon." He said, "Oh yeah. One of the things you say is, you talk about the test of true love." I said, "Yeah, the test of true love is applicable in many cases." He said, "But I have the number one case." I said "What?" He said, "I get on a train and travel fifty-five hours to visit my mother in law." [Laughs]. He said, "Now that's the test of true love."

Clarke: Fifty-five hours, where is she?

Ruggerio: Siberia, she's in Siberia somewhere.

Clarke: Right, that's a long trip.

Ruggerio: That was the thing that hung with me for years and years and years coming out of my trip to Budapest. [Both laugh]. So we got to do a lot of things. We stayed in an Army hotel, beautiful, they took us and entertained us. But the hotel room was bugged. And I could tell because I would run in the morning and have my headset on, and when I came back I would pick up the frequency of the bug. So we were watched pretty closely. Then the counterpart, my escort, was a lieutenant colonel, he said, "Oh, we have similar careers. You're a cavalryman, I'm a cavalryman. You're airborne, I'm airborne. Your wife's a schoolteacher, my wife is a schoolteacher." He would not have known that because I did not put that in [any of my résumé information].

Clarke: You had never told him that.

Ruggerio: I never put it in any of the bio stuff. So they had done their homework.

Clarke: On you, of course they did. The Russians are good at intelligence. They're not good at a lot of things, but they're good at intelligence.

Ruggerio: They gave me a Hungarian hat with a red star, said, "You keep that, it's going to be a collector's item."

Clarke: Yeah, yeah. I have a question for you, you've talked about...in a very short period of time, a career in the military. And the one thing that is ever present in any story like you tell, is these short assignments that add up. Layers on a tree almost, they compound on each other they build on each other. Some of the people you meet early on, you keep and you carry along with you, and they carry you along, and yet there's this, you know, don't expect any kind of consistency, because it's going change tomorrow and that's just how it is. That's not something a lot people in the civilian world really know anything about or are used to. But the riches that you get to carry with you as a result of all these people that you've met, and all these people that you've maintained contact with, carry with you. What are your thoughts on all that?

Ruggerio: I'm gonna...hold that thought one sec, because there's one thing I want to incorporate.

Clarke: Sure.

Ruggerio: In addition to doing that Hungarian thing, I was also -- as the Director of Officer training for the US [Army] -- I was also part of a US-Italian training committee. We would meet ...one quarter [in the US then] we would have a meeting in Bologna, Italy. And one quarter we would meet in Hampton, Virginia, or Washington, with this training committee. This team -- went through some of our training sites. For example, they went to the air assault school, they went to the parachute school, they went to the helicopter training school at Fort Rucker. Went to several things. And they took us, I spent a summer, for example, in July, I spent three weeks with the Alpini forces of the Alps. Just flying up into the mountainside with the helicopters is tough, because the air is so thin...with those helicopters, takes a special dude to fly those things. Well that thing, you befriend people from the professional side of the house. I still maintain contact with the chairman of that committee that I served with, and that was years ago. I'm still in contact with General Vessey's Korean aide, when I was the XO. He retired as a major general in the Korean army, I email this guy at least twice a week. I still maintain contact with the guy in Budapest, not as much, but periodically, you

know like a Christmas card. I still...until this past year when he passed away, I was still sharing Christmas cards with my barber in Fulda Germany from 1960s. That kind of stuff, the civilian population you work with, and the military guys, there's a rapport you establish with these folks, and it's a never breaking thing, you know? Thank God for email, because it just opens up some further lines of communication. It's amazing how much you garner and how much nostalgia comes through, just through a couple of little lines you write through an email, just, "remember this or remember that." It's just...yeah. I would say, of all of the things I'm thankful for, having spent thirty years, I look back, and none of my children pursued the military, they said they did their time with me. I respect that. I hope some of my grandchildren do pursue it. But, what do you garner? You garner camaraderie, you garner friendship, you garner professionalism, you garner training, you garner ethics, you garner integrity. If you didn't have integrity as a kid, you sure got it through the military, hopefully. To me, integrity is beyond reproach, it is non-negotiable. If you don't have integrity, you have nothing. I think all of those things built into a career or a life or a lifestyle, you just...you can't beat it. I mean, the civilian population should be so lucky as to garner from the military. I used to say when I worked at Deloitte, after I got out of the military. I said...you know, I started out by saying to the boss, "One of the toughest things for me to do is figure out what to wear in the morning. If we all wore battle-dress uniforms it would be easy, wouldn't it?"[both chuckled]. One of the things that some of those people had a difficult time doing was maintaining a rapport with...knowing who their people were. They may know you as Ken Clarke, but who's Ken Clarke? You know? He's the guy that works down in humma humma doodah. What about Ken? Is he married? Does he have a family? What are his likes? Does he have a hobby? What should I know about Ken, because he's working with me or for me? I'd like to be able to pick his brain, and we have a rapport, how do we establish this rapport? I don't see this in civilian, I don't see this in corporate America. I'm not saying it's not happening, but my experience in corporate America was not like that. You were a number, you had a job, you left at the end of the day. That was it, you know. Socially, you may do something once in a while, to get the corporate ticket punched or something, but there just isn't...to put my hands on it, I wish I had one word to describe it. I would say the best thing for me was the camaraderie -- I think, is probably one good description -- that you create in the military environment that you do not necessarily share with your civilian counterpart. You know, I don't think they understand what camaraderie really is. You may have a couple of golf buddies or something like that that you play golf with. But, you know, do

they know your family and are they in your lifestyle, can you call them up and say I need something and they'll do it for you? In the military, you move from point A to point B, when you get to point B you're probably gonna know somebody. You know. Because you either been with them before or you've talked to them before or you did something militarily before. I tell people today, for example, my closest friends today are my Norwich buddies, and I've been out of Norwich fifty-six years. They're still my closest friends. There's a group of us who, at our 45th reunion, said, "You know what, we don't know how many more, so instead of doing this every five years, we're gonna do it every year and anybody can join us that want to." And there are about fifteen to twenty of us that do that every year, we get together. When I fish in Vermont, I fish with my Norwich buddies. I've been doing that for 30 plus years. I don't, you know...just something. Norwich instills a lot. It teaches you independence, it teaches you how to lead, it teaches you to step forward and assume your responsibility, it teaches you accountability, it teaches you to try, 'cause the motto is "I will try." If you're afraid to do something, if you go to Norwich, you'll try it. You may not like it, but you'll try it. It teaches you confidence, it instills confidence. It teaches you to be a bold, audacious risk-taker.

Clarke: So your entire career, if you look back on it, including your civilian career...and then your...you know, how much do you attribute that success to what you got a Norwich?

Ruggerio: A majority of it.

Clarke: Really, wow.

Ruggerio: I had values instilled in me as a kid at home, from my parents. But Norwich...even my military prep school was good and it instilled a lot of things in me, but Norwich honed a lot of those skills and supplemented those skills with more.

Clarke: What are you doing with Rolling Thunder right now? Just because you've stayed engaged with Norwich, you're raising money for them, you're kind of saying "Hey, if you want to give something," and people are giving, right?

Ruggerio: Absolutely, ask Rich Snyder...

Clarke: Rich Snyder's job is to do the fundraising, yeah, exactly.

Clarke: But you're also doing stuff with Rolling Thunder, which I think is really interesting. I'd like to hear a little bit about it. I think I can guess the reasons why you're doing it but I don't want to assume...

Ruggerio: Rolling Thunder is a national organization, divided up, it's probably...I would guess eighty to ninety chapters nationwide. We have three in the state of Illinois. I am currently the vice president of Illinois Chapter one, which is the local area here, we have another chapter up in the Libertyville area and another down in the Peoria area. Ours is probably the largest chapter. We have no paid staff, we're all volunteers, probably about 40% of us, maybe 45% of us, are veterans. We have some civilians who just like the mission and some that don't even ride motorcycles. We support keeping alive the prisoner of war missing in action education process. Telling people all about that program, why we have people who are still unaccounted for...we still have 2,500 people unaccounted for from the Vietnam War. We have about 90,000 from all wars, unaccounted for. And we don't want that just to die off. We don't want our federal government to lose sight of the fact that we still would like to get an accountability of those folks. Every so often, you'll hear of somebody's remains being found and brought back to their families. That's Rolling Thunder's primary mission. Our secondary mission, particularly here in Illinois, is supporting our veterans in any way shape or form we can. We purchase items that the VA can't or doesn't purchase for veteran's facilities, like Hines hospital, like LaSalle Veterans' Home, like Manteno Veterans' Home. We buy things. Our fundraising -- we have two, maybe three fundraisers a year -- we accept donations. We don't have a paid staff, so everything we get, we get through our volunteer work. Our big program right now is placing chairs of honor, to ensure that this POW/MIA issue doesn't die and stays in the public eye...we're placing these in public formats and forums, where, when the public walks by and they read the plaque, they know what it's about. Why that chair is vacant, why it's flag draped, and why it's cordoned off. It's a special seat set aside for those who are still unaccounted for. Hopefully, someday someone will be able to say that the last man is home, but that hasn't happened. We currently have one at Soldier Field, one at the state house in Springfield, we're putting one in the new Cook County chambers, we have one in the Joliet Slammers Stadium, we have one at Norwich. Rolling Thunder didn't do the one at Norwich, the students -- the class of 2016 -- put that one in. We would like to put one at the Pritzker Military Library and Museum.

Clarke: That would be good.

Ruggerio: My job is to...I write grant proposals; I get the word out, so to speak. I sell raffle tickets, and I just educate young folks about what it's all about, and keeping alive the veterans thing. I'm the oldest member of my chapter.

Clarke: With the loudest motorcycle, I hope?

Ruggerio: I have a loud motorcycle. That's kind of a Harley patent, you know? That's a very important facet of my life, and I stay active as long as I possibly can, as long as my health stays good I want to continue to do it. I fish, I work, I have fun. I have a lovely lady in my life. We just spend our summers in Chicago and try to go south for a couple of months in the winter. Not a bad idea.

Clarke: Not a bad idea. My last question for you, because we're getting a little bit long here...I know you have things to do, and I have things to do, we all have things to do, maybe even getting lunch is one of those things. As you reflect back on your military career, and you talked little bit about your kids and how they did their time in the military when you were in the military. And you took them with you pretty much from the beginning right? Starting in Germany?

Ruggerio: No, I didn't have kids in Germany. First one was born right when I got home.

Clarke: Oh, you didn't have...oh, right after you got home. You met your wife in Germany, that's right. How does a military career like yours affect your family life? I know this is an answer not just for you personally, it's universal for families in the military.

Ruggerio: First of all, it's how you raise your children, how you parent your children is very important. If your kids are flexible and involved, I say, it's very difficult once you get children in the high school arena. Up to the high school area they're pretty flexible and they can mesh and meld into an organization or a new school or whatever. My four children, my oldest two were fortunate enough to start and complete the same high school. My third child did two years in one high school and two years in another high school and had no issues at all, melded right in. My fourth one did the same sort of thing, two and two. The irony is, she -- after college -- the young one went back to where she did her last two years, taught there, married, and lives there, raising her family there, and is now the [Director of Elementary Education for the City of Newport News, Virginia.] The same town that she went back to. I'm sure some of them would say, yeah, it was tough at certain parts. My oldest daughter had a tough time when she went to Korea, she thought when she came back everything was going to be the same. It really isn't the same with your friends, people pick up and make new friends. For the most

part, all of my children became more worldly because of their travels. They became more self-confident, their confidence levels are extraordinary, I must say that about all of my children. They are all confident. They are all, fortunately for me, good kids. They never gave me anything to worry about, calling the police to say, "You got my kids in jail?" or something. And they're all successfully married and have their families, and all have successful jobs. I think the fact that they were able to partake in that environment, my son, for example participated in International Camporees with Boy Scouts, while in Korea. My daughters are swimmers, they participated in the first Junior Olympics held outside the United States as swimmers and went to Japan. A couple of them got some subsidy for college swimming, so that was helpful. I think they're pretty versatile in their environments, I think that they became more worldly, that their travels now as married people with families, showing their kids some of the things they encountered as youngsters. In some cases even more. I think that it's a good thing for many military families. You've got to be able to deal with including them in the package. When we went to Korea, that was a family decision, that wasn't just mine. They were included, what do you think about this? And they were young, they had input. I don't know if that answers your question.

Clarke: It does. It does. I want to thank you for, we've talked for a while now.

Ruggerio: Oh wow, yes we have.

Clarke: We're going on three hours here. And I'm sitting here going, "Boy, I want to know more on some of the tail end of your career." but we won't do that now. We want to come back and do it after reviewing this, and you see the transcript and say, "Hey, we really need to get into some of that stuff." That's cool with me, we can add that on, and make sure that we get a full perspective of your career in your oral history. Keep that in mind as this gets transcribed and sent over to you and we start dealing with that part of it.

PART II

Clarke: All right, so let's figure this out here, shall we? For what we're gonna talk about and how we're gonna get back into the energy that we had the last time...we had a good conversation, we had a good flow, but I think that what we did here...did we do the 58th Infantry Scout Dog unit?

Ruggerio: Yes.

Clarke: We did do that, yes. Alright, so...

Ruggerio: We did my tenure in Maine, I believe.

Clarke: We did talk about that. We talked about how a military career affects family life.

Ruggerio: Right.

Clarke: We talked about the mood of the DMZ while you were assigned to the 1st Battalion in 72nd Armored. Fifty-four tanks, 800 troops...and the feelings that you had.

Ruggerio: And the fact that there was...did I touch upon the fact...thirty days after I assumed command of that battalion, that was when they had the assassination of Park Chung-Hee, [by the Chair of the Korean CIA] and subsequently two coups, so we deployed, and we stayed deployed for four months...because we all thought our friends were coming. Of course, it didn't happen, but the South Koreans thought that our US tanks were the ones that were surrounding the Blue House, which is, you know, the equivalent of the White House. And they weren't ours, they were...basically, the ROK [Republic of Korea] tank, which was similar in configuration and structure to ours, so everybody thought it was ours, but it wasn't. And so, we got over that accusation, and we did our thing and they did their thing, the ROKs did. And, of course, they subsequently found out that the coup was led by the chairman of the ROK joint chiefs, the ROK chairman of the joint chiefs. And so they settled that, but we were deployed for four months. First four months of command, we were in the field.

Clarke: So when is this? Let's reestablish when this is.

Ruggerio: 1979. He was assassinated, I wanna say like, October, early October of '79 when the assassination took place. And we deployed until, basically after Christmas. And we were just ready, alert status, but nothing really took place. They settled in...Seoul settling down, after the aftermath of the chairman being taken into custody...I was trying to remember his name, exactly. I can see it, [General Chun Doo-hwan]

Clarke: So, fast forward 2017, what's changed in the Korean peninsula?

Ruggerio: [Laughs]. Nothing! I think it's...he's gotten a little...the young one has gotten a little bolder, and he's trying to...I think he's testing the waters with the new regime, that's my feeling. I suspect that, at some point, I think somebody in his empire is gonna get to the point of frustration and do something. That's my gut and my hope, basically I hope somebody takes him out. He, at one point, took

out his uncle, who was the chief of staff of the North Korean army at that point, because he didn't feel that he was getting the loyalty and, you know, support from [his senior folks] ...and I'm wondering if that was the beginnings of his downfall. At some point, somebody's gonna do it. I really don't know for sure. It's just a feeling. He's testing the waters with the Trump administration, and getting bold and pushy, and I'm hoping that China squeezes him. It looks like they already have because they've increased the price of gasoline, and they're gettin' all their fuel from China...it's now five dollars a gallon in Pyongyang, you know? Maybe that's the first endeavor on the part of China, to squeeze them a little bit. And of course, you can't talk about food products, because the North Koreans are starving. They don't have any diet that you and I, or anybody else in normalcy would aspire to, because they don't get anything. Of course, families are pitted against each other, you know, if you're a mom or a dad, and you've got kids, and your kids are doing something askew, you get blamed. So a parent will squeal on their own children, if they had to, and vice-versa. Children will squeal on their parents. The wrath of the youngster there will come down upon them. So I just...I don't know. In terms of 2017, nothing has really...he's getting a little bolder, that's what I would say. And testing the waters. But nothing has really changed from what happened back in the '70s, or even the '80s when his father...when this guy's father was in power. His grandfather was bold, his father was bold, but this guy's really bold.

Clarke: When you were over there, how did you get information about what was happening in the north? How would you find out about...?

Ruggerio: Our intelligence was pretty prominent. My first part of the...before I was a tank commander, I was the XO to the CINC, so we were getting daily intelligence updates. I sat in on an intelligence briefing every morning. And we would feed that information back to the chairman's office. It was there...I mean, what was transpiring, and then of course, Kim Il-Sung, in 1970...go back to '76 when they had the hatchet murders, you know, when they first came over and chopped the trees down because they were blocking the view, and encountered US troops, and they killed them, and they had a few US troops that were killed? And so there was a lot of unrest at that particular time, going back to 1976. And then subsequently there was a lull where we had negotiations ongoing -- almost weekly -- with the North Korean representatives and US representatives at Panmunjom, at the 38th parallel. And negotiations were there, our intelligence folks were there, we'd bring back info and...so we had a pretty good feel for what was goin' on. Bottom line, there was little activity other than propaganda.

Now, there was even propaganda leaflets that the North were spreading in the South, and...gee, I wish I...I'm sure in my footlocker somewhere I must have a copy of a propaganda leaflet that was thrown back then, but...all they were doing was expressing the distasteful efforts of the US forces in conjunction with the ROK forces.

Clarke: The grandfather...

Ruggerio: Kim Il-sung?

Clarke: Yeah. He basically said that he hoped that the Korean peninsula would be reunified via peace, but by war if necessary. It doesn't seem that that has changed any, and if you try to understand the North Korean mind -- at least the government and the military, or at least the supreme leader, if you will -- that seems to be the single motivation of everything they're doing, motivation to reunify the peninsula.

Ruggerio: By their rules.

Clarke: By their rules. And by...so, do you see any difference in the way that they've been building up their forces over time, versus when you were there, and what you see now? With the exception, obviously, that they have nukes, but...

Ruggerio: Yes. They're getting more and more active with their nuclear effort, they're getting more and more active with their launches...that was kinda few and far between. The deployment of ships in and around the peninsula, you know, if you recall the Pueblo...that was the last big endeavor they were involved with in terms of capturing the crew and that sort of stuff. But I think now, they're doing more and more, he definitely is in more control of what's transpiring in terms of what the media's publishing, you know, and I have a difficult time understanding why anybody...you know, he's got three US people in captivity now...and why anybody would even wanna go there, other than Dennis Rodman or something. [Laughs]. Go figure. But I think it's more active now than it was back then in terms of what they're doing, what they're publicizing they're doing...if they did it, it was quiet. The thing we had to contend with, we knew they had the tunnels dug back then, and, you know, there was a period of time when they detected the tunnel, there was one that could hold eight soldiers abreast at port high with their weapons, that's how big it was, you know, coming through there. And, of course, once it was detected and closed off it became a tourist attraction, up in the north. But I think the activity now is more prevalent than it was back then.

- Clarke: You've been in Vietnam; you've been in Korea. What's the difference there, other than the outcome of the two wars?
- Ruggerio: Well, I tell folks when I was in Vietnam, when the South Korean Forces were on either flank was the time the US forces were able to sleep. Because the North Vietnamese, nor the Vietcong, would engage, because they were petrified of the capabilities of the South Korean forces. They were very well trained and pretty tough fighters, very tough fighters. The Tiger Division was one of the more prevalent...I don't want to use the term notorious, but better trained, of the units. By the way, at that particular time, when I was in Vietnam, it was commanded by a general by the name of Yu Byung-hyun, who was a Korean guy who subsequently became the deputy to the commander in chief -- John Vessey -- who I worked for, as the ROK general, as a four-star. He became the chairman of the ROK JCS after he left our job, and subsequently the ambassador to the US. He commanded the Tiger Division in Vietnam [while I was there]. Very tough fighters, and my feeling is, today, if the North Korean soldiers would engage South Korean soldiers, I think they'd get...you know, excluding China's support or anything like that, I think the South Koreans will kick their butts. I really do. They're tough fighters. Well trained. Much better trained. The North Koreans seem to be properly dressed and they can parade well, but I'm not sure if they can fight well.
- Clarke: The one thing that seems to keep anybody from acting against the North is the fact that all that artillery is basically looking at Seoul, and there's a lot of civilian lives at stake...
- Ruggerio: Lot of lives at stake.
- Clarke: You know, that city has grown and prospered, I would assume that it's a two-way scenario there, so it's...
- Ruggerio: Absolutely. But in terms of Pyongyang versus Seoul, Pyongyang is not what Seoul is...not anywhere near what Seoul is, in terms of [economic stability]. They [the North] have a lot of facade. You can look at the building at Panmunjom from the North side, and it looks grandiose in front but it's only 13 feet deep. It's a little guardhouse, but, nothing there. Just a facade. And the other interest is, there's a lot of Japanese money tied up in Seoul. So I would suspect that the Japanese would be very supportive of the South at this point in time, unlike yesteryear, when they weren't. A lot of investment in Seoul by the Japanese!

Clarke: Well you have this very unique perspective, given everything that's continued to go on in Korea. So, how do you...when you talk about Korea with just...a layperson, what do you say? What's the first thing you say to them, that comes to mind? Based on your experience. You know, you're meeting somebody...you've just met 'em and somehow world events come up and...

Ruggerio: It's funny you say that, I was just asked that question the other day by a banker. "Guys, I'm worried about Korea, what's gonna happen?" You know, and I said, "The fact that this guy's a kook is genetic," and I said, "If they were to come after the people in Seoul from an artillery perspective, they can do some devastation. But, from an on-the-ground perspective, they would get their fannies kicked very quickly." I think that the invasion...engaging forces from the South would be very quick to annihilate the North, that's my feeling.

Clarke: How do you think the nuclear weapons they have changes things?

Ruggerio: Well, he's gotta really be kooky to push that button. And he may well do it, but I'm hoping that we can have early warning to any endeavor that he attempts to do that can resolve some of that nuke stuff. With China's effort, I think China will probably have to...and I think China would be leery of their actions, to do something like that, too, in terms of supporting a country that would do that at this point in time, because of what's been transpiring with our government and the Chinese government, and the trade issues, and all this other dialogue that's been taking place. I just think that our secretary of state is doing a good job, our secretary of defense is doing a great job, you know, and just...I would hope that close knit group of people would give him a little bit better guidance. Of course, his engineers are probably at death's door. If another one of these things fails, you're dead, you know? I just...I don't think he'd waste any time doing that, but where's he getting...where's he getting all these engineers from, you know? So, from my perspective, somebody I just met, I would say...I would worry about the nukes and the artillery devastation, but I wouldn't worry about the ground fight. I think the South would take the ground fight to the cleaners.

Clarke: Hmm. That's very interesting. It's...you have a lot to think about when you see the news coming on daily about this. Have you read *The Orphan Master's Son*, by the way?

Ruggerio: No.

Clarke: That's a special book. It's about North Korea. And it's devastatingly funny...

Ruggerio: Is it funny?

Clarke: Oh gosh, dark humor, 100%. Every ounce of it is dark humor, but it's funny. I'll have to get a copy of that book, I'll see if you can find it or something. Dennis Johnson...Adam Johnson is the guy's name. Funny book. We have it in the collection here if you want to borrow it.

Ruggerio: I may do that, yeah.

Clarke: It's quite a take on the North Koreans and their activities. So, last time we talked we got into your...we brushed across, very briefly, about some things you did with the...what you did when you came back from Korea. 'Cause Korea was your last international deployment, and then you went into...you were in Washington...

Ruggerio: Right.

Clarke: Then you worked on the presidential inauguration for Reagan, but...

Ruggerio: That was later.

Clarke: That was later.

Ruggerio: Before that, I came back from Korea, I was back 30 days, had a massive heart attack, was deadlined, so to speak, for a while, and then I went back to work in the Pentagon. And one of my treats that was rendered to me after I beat a medical board, was to go on to the War College. I was selected to go to War College, but since I had just come back from Korea...the rule of thumb was, if you just came off a deployment and you came out on a War College list, they would defer you a year because they needed you to do your two years before you could get another PCS. So even though I had just come back, part of my recuperation period was, "We'll waive that for you, you just go to school." So that's what I did. I went to the War College, and then...

Clarke: What'd you get your degree in?

Ruggerio: The War College, I was in the logistics management side. The Industrial College of the Armed Forces in D.C. It's part of National Defense University. National Defense University has the National War College, which is more strategic and tactical, and they have the industrial college, which is more logistics and logistics management. So I went to logistics management side. You don't have a choice, they just send you to where they want you to go. And anyway...so, I did that for a

year, and worked my physical being back to some sort of normalcy...you know, I beat a medical board, they tried to medically retire me at that point, but I was successful at beating that and staying in.

Clarke: How old were you when you had your heart attack?

Ruggerio: Thirty days after my 40th birthday.

Clarke: Whoa! That's really early.

Ruggerio: And I was 20 pounds lighter than I am now. [Laughs]. No history...no family history or anything, just one of those things. My theory was...and we're getting off the beaten track here, my theory was you can't take a thirty day leave, and that was the first time I'd ever taken a thirty day leave. And I think the chemical [make up in my body], after going crazy for three years, you know, working, working, working, then all of the sudden you take a thirty day leave and try to relax, I think the chemistry body has some effect on you. My theory was, that's what happened. And they said, "Has some merit," but I was a smoker, and they said...they wouldn't say that caused it -- 'cause I was a big jogger, too -- they wouldn't say it caused it, but it may have been a contributing factor. So, to me...I say that's probably the cause. Anyway, I did that, I beat it, and then I was fortunate enough to be selected to be division G-3, which is a pretty stressful job, and they said, "Do you think you can do it?" I says, "I can do it," and I did. I went down to Fort Hood, Texas and became the G-3 of the 2nd Armored Division, and I did that for twenty-two months. And then...

Clarke: Well let's talk a little about what you did there.

Ruggerio: Okay. As the G-3, you're the operations officer for a division of 17,000 soldiers, three brigades. One of our brigades was already deployed in Europe. The 1st Brigade of the 2nd Armored Division was a deployed brigade. [Coughs] Excuse me. So we did all the operational stuff for the two brigades here. That was a time they had the quote Reforger program, where you take a brigade in tow and you move them to Europe of a training period. And all of our equipment was stored over there, and we'd go draw it out, and maneuver, and do everything for a month at a time, then put it all back in storage and come back. So that was my planning, organizing, and executing...those sorts of things. And then we did a lot of...on a trial basis, we became the night fighting division. One of the things I did in Korea was I initiated a program for my battalion for night fighting, because most of the families were not there in Korea, and so we were able to train at night because we believed that if we're gonna fight we're gonna do our best

fighting at night. And so we had a program where we would maintain, and sleep, and do everything during the day, and then we would work at night. Just like working the night shift, you know? And that's how we trained. So when we came back...when I came back to Fort Hood, I was able to convince the powers that be that we ought to initiate a night fighting program. So we became the night fighting division, so I basically put a program together and we took it around the country to other divisions. And I took it to Europe, too, to our brigade in Europe. And several of the brigades attempted to do that. We did it for...probably, at least the first year I was at Fort Hood. And we did a lot of briefing of families, 'cause the soldiers at Fort Hood had families there, and getting them used to having their dad's go to work at night and be home during the day, families had to be quiet if they had little children because dad had to sleep, and that sort of stuff. We did a lot of our training at night, we did most of our maintenance during the day, but...like, our motor pool people would work during the day, but they'd be off at night, for the most part. Split shifts, so to speak. And so we did that, and it was very successful...very successful program. We had a lot of night vision equipment, trained in blackout conditions, a lot of maneuvering of tanks...and so it was a very successful program. We have stuff...I'll have to bring you a copy of one of the posters we had, night fighting pictures our artists created and our draftsmen created.

Clarke: That's something the Army is still doing?

Ruggerio: I think they are doing it, but I don't think it's a mandatory thing. I don't think it's Army-wide. There are units...I would suspect that some of the units in Korea are still doing it, I would think that some of the units in the training centers, they'll do...they'll split it, the training centers at Fort Ord or Fort Polk, I would suspect that they do some training at night. And keep it, we call it "reverse cycle." And it works. Most of the commanders today may think the same way, that your fights are gonna be at night. I'm not sure how it's going, in terms of fighting in the Middle East right now, but I suspect a lot of it's done at night, too.

Clarke: Well, this brings a question that's kind of a combo of then and now, that I have for you. In the news, of course, we've seen certain elected officials say this carrier strike group is gonna be here, there's gonna be submarines here, and these are statements that...people are saying, "Oh, my word," and getting kind of worked up about, I'm talking about President Trump about the Carl Vinson and the...I think they were Ohio-class submarines, but...they were already there, weren't they? I mean, isn't the military constantly being aware of what its

footing is, and aren't our ships, and aren't our men and women nowadays training at all times for possible scenarios?

Ruggerio: Absolutely, absolutely. I would hope they are.

Clarke: So what's going on here, because you were talking about what you were doing...it's 1980? It's the '80s, the Cold War, but we're not engaged in any kind of global conflict, we're not engaged in any kind of war, little things here and there, but you're doing all these things to make sure that we're ready.

Ruggerio: Your readiness level, I mean, you've gotta try and maintain and be ready to do it, besides the training end, if your vehicles weren't up to snuff...the training isn't gonna do you any good unless your equipment was ready, so we did the same sort of thing. And I would suspect they're doing that now, I suspect that even in the Middle East there are certain units that are doing something all the time, and there are certain units that are down, you know, for rest and recupe and that sort of stuff, 'cause you can't do 'em 24/7 without giving them a break of some sort, I mean, there are periods of time that people are active 24/7 for extended periods, and then they'll be replaced and somebody else will do it 24/7 for an extended period as well, so I don't think it's anything different, whether the ships are here or there, they're doing some sort of training and they'd get diverted from..."Oh, this training cycle we must go over here because the Koreans are getting anxious, we need ships here." So they're ready, it's nothing they have to get ready for 'cause they're out to sea, and they just move from point A to point B, and point B happens to be a crisis point right now. That's what I suspect.

Clarke: I was just curious about that right now, because I know that there were strike groups in that part of Asia, off the Asian shores, for every single administration -- every year -- from when you were in the service 'til now, that they've been there. So I'm kinda wondering what the newfound, "Oh my, we might have a submarine underwater somewhere in a strategic location," or "Oh my, we might have a strike group somewhere" you know, out there in a strategic location, that is the norm for us.

Ruggerio: I remember back in late '78, early '79 when General Vessey was called back to meet with President Carter, and this was to determine whether or not he was going to be a candidate for Jimmy Carter's chief of staff of the Army, and Jimmy Carter and he didn't see eye to eye on troop disposition, because we had about 25 to 30,000 troops, at that time, deployed in Korea, and Carter wanted that reduced, and General Vessey said, "No". They weren't on the same sheet of

music, therefore, General Vessey was not selected as chief of staff of the Army. However, General Vessey's recommendation was happened to be "Shy"[M. Gen.Edward] Meyer at that time, who jumped from two-star to four-star, and became chief, and subsequently, General Vessey became the vice chief. Later on Ronald Reagan became the president, General Vessey became the Chairman, [of the Joint Chiefs of Staff]. So it all worked out.

Clarke: It all worked out, yeah. So, what's after that? I mean, you were...

Ruggerio: Finished Korea, I came back, I went to the War College, I went to 2nd Armored Division to become the operations officer -- I told you -- we did these Reforger programs of deploying troops overseas, and one of the other things that we did a lot of, in the training aspect, we did TEWTs, Tactical Exercises Without Troops. We would engage Civil War battlefields, we would walk the grounds and say, "This is how we would do it today," if we were deploying our forces today versus what they were doing in the Civil War would do something like that. We did the same sort of thing in Europe...I took a contingent to Maastricht, Holland, where the 2nd Armored Division liberated Maastricht in World War II. We walked the same sort of ground, and we did the same exercises on how they did it then, and what we would do -- back in [our time] the '80s -- and I'm sure if they went today, they would use a different scenario. That kind of training is what we conducted, and we made sure that our alliances with the Dutch were maintained, and they appreciated us, of course, because we liberated them. Maastricht's people are just a firm believers that the 2nd Armored Division could do no wrong because we had liberated them.

Clarke: I'll bet they liked having you around for that reason alone.

Ruggerio: They loved us and we loved them. When I returned to Fort Hood and one daysoon after got a phone call from my assignment officer who asked me what I know about inaugurations, and I said, "I believe we have one every four years." He said, "You're about to be educated." That's when I found out that the Army has executive agent responsibility for all ceremonial activity in Washington, D.C. [Coughs] Excuse me. Thus I went to Washington, I was given a greeting and a little office about this size that had eight footlockers stacked in it, and they said, "These are your after action reports from the previous inaugural, feel free to go through 'em." And I went through them, of course, the after action reports that I read are the things that people wanted me to read. [Laughs]. So, at that point we decided to put together a staff, and the commander of the Military District of Washington was kinda the big guru over it, and then they brought in a brigadier

general to work as quote "the director," and my job was the deputy director/chief of staff of the 1985 armed forces inaugural [committee] and since that was Ronald Reagan's second inauguration there wasn't a requirement for a transition team. They'd been used to what the White House activity was about. So once the election was over, he did...he, meaning the Reagan administration, sent 500 people to work with us, and our staff was made up of all forces, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and of course we worked very closely with all the folks from the White House, the administrators, the protocol people, we worked with the liaisons from congress and made sure that each and every congressman and senator had a priority list from their states that they wanted, and then we, of course, had an operations group, our G-3, [then Col. Jay Johnson] of, staff with...it had the responsibility of putting together the parade, and who was gonna line up first, who was gonna line up second, who was gonna line up last, and it was all priority, based on each and every states senator's seniority and their location and their job, so they [i.e., our G3 and our staff] did that. We brought together the staff from the Secret Service, and the staff from the City of Washington...that was the particular era that Mr. Gaddafi was a little kooky, and threatened to do some things. He had threatened to kamikaze aircraft into the swearing-in ceremony. Of course, and so we had to take precautionary measures against that, and so the air defense endeavors in and around Washington during that period of time were pretty significant. And it was one of those exercises that turned out to be very, very cold, so you had your plan, and in your planning you had to have an A-plan, a B-plan, a contingency plan, and what was going to happen. As the cold got closer, our staff was scurrying to find stuff that the musicians could use on the mouthpieces to preclude freezing. We imported some sort of a salve from Sweden and we got it over here very quickly. Because of Mr. Gaddafi's actions we needed an additional command post, so we were able to acquire a big confiscated cabin cruiser from the Justice Department that they had taken off the coast of Florida in a drug bust, and we brought it up to Washington and placed it in the Potomac as a mobile command post. [Laughs]. We did a lot of extra things for the preparation, and of course at the eleventh hour, we actually met with Mr. Reagan at 8:30 the night before the inaugural parade, and he said, "Move it indoors," it was too cold. He had the coldest inaugural in history, and he also had the warmest. His first one was the warmest, second one was the coldest, in the history of presidential inaugurals.

Clarke: So how cold was it?

Ruggerio: Oh, it was well below zero, the temperature was...wind-chill factor was below zero, but I can't tell ya, I don't recall the [exact Farenheit temperature].

Clarke: I was wondering if that stuck in your mind.

Ruggerio: It probably should have. But we moved the parade indoors to the old Capital Centre in Landover, Maryland, that's where it took place. Now, in terms of scurrying around, there were a lot of groups and we even had eight balls playing, because of the cold weather, and not everybody was able to get to those locations, so at the eleventh hour the group called the eagles -- the Eagles are big donors and benefactors to the Republican National Committee -- they put together their own ball, of course the military scurried to help them get that thing organized, and they put it up in the Daughters of the American Revolution Hall in Washington, at the eleventh hour there was a ninth ball, so...things like that, all of the little idiosyncrasies that go into the planning, sometimes at the eleventh hour get modified quite a bit, and fortunately the military is quite astute and can get things done very quickly. Everybody has their appropriate clearances, so you don't have to worry about security endeavor, and so it worked out. Afterward, I said that...because what I had read in those eight footlockers really didn't tell the truth, we kept 50 folks onboard for almost six months to write the after action report and write the "how-to" manual, because there wasn't one. So subsequent inaugural groups could reach a shelf, pull off the book, know who to contact in the Military District of Washington for parade purposes, for close ties to Arlington National Cemetery, close ties to The Old Guard, who are very active participants, and close ties to the liaison officers in the Pentagon, the White House, the City of Washington, the city council, all the authorities, the police, the fire, you know...every manhole cover in Washington was welded shut, on the parade route, and so everything was pretty significantly done, and then at the eleventh hour we moved the parade indoors. [Laughs]. It was a great experience for me. Frank Sinatra happened to be the director of the gala for Mr. Reagan, and of course all the celebrities were coming in, and we took good care of them in terms of getting them to their hotels and getting them their gift baskets and that sort of stuff, so they took good care of us, and of course, you know the old premise that the military is not allowed to take, at that time, anything more valued than 25 dollars, so when Mr. Sinatra wanted to buy our staff Rolex watches we couldn't take 'em, so we said, "Thank you very much, but if you want to donate to charity, make that donation to charity," so it was that kind of a program. He was a strong leader, I was very surprised, it was a pleasure to meet him, and I thought he ran a tight ship, and he put on an

extraordinary gala. And even my children, who were all young at the time...I tell this story, Tom Selleck came up to my youngest daughter, kissed her hand, I think she went for months without washing her hand! [Laughs].

Clarke: So your family got to experience a lot of this with you.

Ruggerio: Absolutely. The families of the inaugural staff got to see the gala rehearsal. So it was really, really nice. A lot of treats. We worked very, very hard, we worked very long, the arduous task that we had to do, and encountered certain people, and that sort of stuff. All the automobile...manufacturers donated automobiles, and they were auctioned off after with a little plaque on their dashboard that said, "This was used in the 1985 presidential inaugural." And all the...Coke and Pepsi stocked machines in our headquarters, our headquarters was located in a terrible part of Washington down in the Anacostia Southeast area, but we did some nice renovations, and after all was said and done, the inaugural committee was able to turn 11 million dollars back to the US Treasury. So that was pretty significant, back then, you know. Absolutely spectacular experience for me.

Clarke: Other than getting to meet Frank Sinatra and things like that, what really sticks out in your mind about it, as far as great experience? What's your takeaway?

Ruggerio: People. The people you deal with. Bringing together people that you don't know from all services, and melding them into a staff that performs extraordinarily well. The other thing we were able to do was, we could go out to the Pentagon and go around to the services and say, "Hey, we need fifteen escorts for this particular gala event," or "We need twenty-five escorts in dress uniforms to escort the ladies up the stairs at the ball." You know? And because they had security clearances, they didn't have to worry too much about it. How everything just...you know, people worry about stuff, so to speak. Stuff, military guys and gals have an innate ability to put things together, and plan it, organize it and execute it. And there may be a flaw, it's invisible to you, we may know about it when we're doing it, but we make it very transparent so you don't recognize it. And being able to do that...I look back at that and say, "Jeez, that was a major, major event." Now, as our preamble to that, we didn't just go boom, boom, boom. As our preamble to that, if you recall, there was a ceremony for the...recognizing the unknown soldier from Vietnam. We did that program first...the whole staff that was working the inaugural, worked the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier for Vietnam. In conjunction with the Old Guard who, of course, performed that duty every day...we organized it with them, and it took place, and that was our preamble to the inaugural. Now, communications equipment

and security equipment and all that...see, we reached out to the 1984 Olympics that took place in LA, you know the Military Police and our military folks worked that, as well, so we just superimposed that whole group on our ground. We had a built in security force already established just like they had at the Olympics. Some things were easy, other things weren't so easy, but as I said, we made 'em transparent. So they all came out smelling like a rose, the inaugural was very successful, I think Mr. Reagan and his entire administration was very happy with the outcome, and so we go on from there. So as I said, we kept about 50 folks, pretty well tasked group of writers and thinkers, and we put together a how-to manual. Of course, there was a gentleman who worked for the Military District of Washington -- he was a civilian -- who had been through many, many...I mean, Reagan's wasn't his first, he had been there years and years and years, so he had a...he was an institutional memory, you know, and so he helped a great deal, he really helped a great deal.

Clarke: If you were to advise the United States on how to...I'm just thinking out loud here, and we don't have to spend a lot of time on this, but if you were to advise the United States on how to observe the Centennial of World War I in Washington, would part of your advice be to put the Army and the Navy on making sure that happened right?

Ruggerio: Absolutely.

Clarke: 'Cause they've got...they do this.

Ruggerio: Absolutely, that's...

Clarke: 'Cause right now that's not what's gonna happen. I don't know who's gonna put it together but it sounds like...sounds like there might be a little bit of Dom Ruggerio in an office over there, some kind of "how-to-do-something-big-in-Washington."

Ruggerio: They should...you know, my suggestion would be take the inaugural committee from this last inauguration, put 'em together, bring on the Old Guard folks from the Military District, and...

Clarke: 'Cause there's two things they gotta do, they gotta do Memorial Day at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, 'cause that's...World War I started with that, then they gotta do something on Armistice Day, which is Veterans Day, they can do it in the cathedral or they can do it somewhere in the capital or whatever, but...but it seems like they would be the ones to do it, wouldn't they?

Ruggerio: Oh absolutely, I would think that one of those events should take place two-fold. The Veterans Day one, they can have a solemn service in the cathedral or whatever, and then have a grandiose outdoor service in the Mall.

Clarke: Do a celebration of victory, World War I victory.

Ruggerio: Yeah, in the Mall. Even if they wanted to incorporate a reenactment of sorts, a mini-reenactment of some battle or something...and you'd have to bring on Paul Henderson from Cantigny right here, he's a big contributor. You know, with the 1st Infantry Division People, he'd be a great guy to...

Clarke: I might call on you on this. I might pick your brain on this, 'cause there's gonna be something that could be big or that could be eh come, a little more than a year from now. So...

Ruggerio: Yeah, there's a...I think the military...if they're not...if somebody isn't thinking...incorporating military talent to help put this thing together, they're missing the boat.

Clarke: I think they might be. I think they might be. The thing on the outbreak of World War I ceremony we had in Kansas City, the Navy wasn't even there, so ...you know, World War I started out as a Navy fight that turned into the doughboys, so...I might pick your brain on that, but...

Ruggerio: How did that happen?

Clarke: There's government commissions, and volunteers, and...the government's not paying anything for the World War I centennial commission. There's no money from the government, but I think there's ways around that.

Ruggerio: There should be donors...

Clarke: Well, we're the biggest donor to the group, our foundation here, so...

Ruggerio: ...some corporate donors...

Clarke: Well, we'll figure that out. There's a big centennial coming up here, and...especially 11-11-18, so...anyway, I want to know a little about...so you've done the Presidential Inauguration, you've had this amazing experience, where does the 12th Cavalry Regiment at Fort Knox come in?

Ruggerio: Okay, well...

Clarke: Did we skip this?

Ruggerio: We hadn't gotten to it.

Clarke: Hadn't gotten to that yet. So what's after...what's after your assignment in Washington?

Ruggerio: Okay, after the inaugural, I went to do a special study for the chief of staff's office -- a six-month study -- I had come out on the brigade command lists, and I wasn't ready to assume command yet, so I had a time period...they took some of us "loose" people..."loose" people who were en route, or finishing up one job and not yet ready to take on a new job...but they would do something. And they put together a team of folks from all over the country -- all of the military, officers and enlisted, and we did the non-commissioned officer professional development study -- this took about six months -- to determine what we wanted out non-commissioned officers to be...what did we want from them from an educational perspective, what did we want for them to be able to do to make command sergeant major. There had to be some stepping stones, you know? There's certain jobs you have to have -- I don't like to use the term ticket punch -- but yeah, to get your ticket punched, just like in the officer category, you have to have certain jobs to aspire to higher grades and that sort of stuff. So we did, we put together...we, for example, we brought on...we thought that the non-commissioned officer ought to have an associate degree of some form...the command sergeant major academy had to be a prerequisite to go in to be a command sergeant major, and so it was a developmental level by grade, from the time you were a buck sergeant, if you were a career person, to...what you had to do at each level to reach the grade of command sergeant major, education-wise, professional-wise...to enhance. So we did that study, it was six months, we presented it to the chief, they bought off on it, they published it, it went out Army-wide, and it was implemented. And then I left that particular job and went to the pre-command course...I had to get re-educated again to be a brigade commander. So I went to pre-command course...let me take a step back. Before I went to the professional development committee where my particular role was training...what training level, some of them had operations, some of them had personnel, mine was training. Before I [began the study group], on a dare at 45 years old, maybe a little bit older, 45 or 46, I went to the Army Air Assault School. Just because I wanted to see if I could do it. [Laughs]. And somebody dared me. "I dare ya." So I went and my boss went with me [i.e.] my immediate boss from the inaugural.

Clarke: How old was he?

Ruggerio: He was probably 48 at the time. Maybe 50. We we went through that course. [Laughs]. And it was tough. I chuckled because I still tell the story that your final test in the air assault program was...to [run] 10 miles, full pack, in...less than... two hours and 30 minutes.

Clarke: Ten miles, full pack...and you're 46 years old.

Ruggerio: Yeah.

Clarke: And your boss is 50.

Ruggerio: Yeah.

Clarke: And you did it?

Ruggerio: And we did it. And there was one young sergeant who lapped us.

Clarke: [Laughs].

Ruggerio: And I said to him, "You do it one more time, you're dead!" [Both laugh]. But I'd come home every night and I'd sit in a hot tub, I'd just bask there for hours, I was so sore. 'Cause they'd really put you through the rituals? And it's all rappelling out of aircraft, and rappelling on walls, bouncing and running, pushups, and...

Clarke: At 45 years old you're not exactly a spring chicken anymore, this is when they make you retire from baseball and that kind of thing. And you did all that.

Ruggerio: I did it. I passed it. Got the air assault wings, so...so I had air assault, and I had my airborne from previous days. I was an old man when I went to -- at 27 -- when I went to jump school, so...but, we did that. But anyway, I went on to that, left that, went to pre-command, then I went to Fort Knox and assumed command of the 12th Cavalry Regiment. The 12th Cavalry Regiment was formerly the 2nd Armored Training Brigade. And they decided to bring back the colors -- to reactivate the colors of the 12th Cavalry Regiment -- because they were part of the regimental program at the time, so we became the 12th Cavalry Regiment, which consisted of three squadrons. The first squadron was made up of soldiers who were armor officer basic soldiers, the advanced course soldiers, which were captains, we had lieutenants coming to the basic course, we had captains going to the advanced course, and then we had all the subsequent courses -- the maintenance courses -- that the officers went through. And the first squadron was the support package for the basic course. The second squadron was the

support package for the advanced course. And then the fifth squadron was the support package for all the other maintenance courses. So, besides the officers going through their basic...my brigade was responsible for those people, the basic lieutenants, the captains, and so we're...it's just like having soldiers, only they were officers. And then we had the one group...like the Army band, fell under the purview of the 12th Cavalry Regiment, regimental band. So we supported all the activities in and around Fort Knox. That was considered a 'training and doctrine command' command, unlike a 'forces command' command. So it wasn't a combat unit, but it was a training unit. So there were...differences between combat brigades and training brigades, this was a training brigade.

Clarke: So, what is the functional difference of that, just for...?

Ruggerio: You train them, you don't deploy them. All your job was is to train them. And then the forces command side, the combat...they would be deployed if they were ...[needed].

Clarke: They would go over there. So...that was just for anybody watching in the future, who's...

Ruggerio: Now, we worked for TRADOC, and the forces command, the combat battalions worked for forces command, at that time. My main...big boss was General Thurman, at the time -- Max Thurman -- who was just a genius, Army genius. When I finished my two year tenure as a brigade commander, although I was hopefully going to a forces command position as an O-6 at that time, General Thurman reached out, he said, "I want former TRADOC commanders to come to TRADOC." So, I became the director of officer training for the Army at headquarters TRADOC. That was my last assignment.

Clarke: Well, before we move on to your last assignment, explain to me a little bit about what exactly a cavalry regiment is. 'Cause when you say 'cav' or cavalry, you start thinking of horses, or maybe if you've been...you think about Vietnam, you think about helicopters, Air Cav, but what is it...what does that mean? This is the '80s, and you're doing cavalry training, and you're training officers to be in a cavalry regiment, and then they could be pulled over into the operational side or be deployed at some point. What does that mean for what you did and why it was important, 'cause I would imagine they're still doing all that stuff, with maybe some different toys and stuff, but...

Ruggerio: The cavalry configuration is made up of a combined arms team. You have your tanks, you have your infantry, you have your scouts, you have your indirect...I call it your artillery, your mortars...your mortars in a cavalry organization...whereas a tank battalion is strictly all tanks. Pure armor. An armor battalion is [tanks]. A cavalry unit is a combined arms team. And, you know...because yesteryear it was horse cavalry, and then air cavalry, and even in the air cavalry, the air cavalry troop had helicopters versus tanks. That was the [coughs]...excuse me, that was the difference between an air cav unit and a ground cav unit. Ground cav unit had tanks, air cav unit had helicopters. But you still had the same configuration. You had scouts...you had air scouts, you had...your gunships were your tanks, and then you had your rockets...your Cobras, and attack helicopters, so to speak. Yeah, so it was a different configuration, whereas the ground, you had your armor, ground cavalry was tanks...so let's just hypothetically take a ground cavalry troop...a ground cavalry troop had two tanks per platoon, so that's six tanks in a troop plus the commander's tank _____ [inaudible 1:05:18], and then...the ground cavalry troop had three platoons, so you got two, four, six...two tanks per platoon, and you had your scout squad, you had your scout configuration, that was two tracked vehicles with scout squads in 'em, and their job was to reconnoiter, and then you had your infantry squad, which was your eleven person infantry squad, they had a tracked vehicle, and then you had your indirect, which was your mortar crew, which is a four-person crew -- you had three of those -- one per platoon. And...so it was just a configuration...I mean, if I had a sketch board I could sketch it out for you, but...but the air guys did the same thing, only with aircraft...helicopters.

Clarke: So you're doing a lot of training...I mean, it's a lot of repetition. So, in that repetition, what exactly are you repeating over and over again until you get it right?

Ruggerio: The configuration. Who moves first, who moves second, who moves third, how they're controlled. The platoon leader of a cav platoon usually rode in his tank or his tracked...his personal tracked vehicle. And he could move from a tank to a jeep, or a tank to a tracked vehicle with his own driver, depending on the need. But he's just maneuvering. Scouts reconnoiter, tanks engage...basically...I gotta caveat that, because tanks engage when required to. Normally a cavalry unit was to scout, and find the enemy. Fix the enemy, and then somebody else would engage him. You know, bring your tanks up...and that goes...the cavalry thing, that hats and the spurs and the horses...I mean, that's all tradition, you know?

And the cav units today still maintain that tradition of the old horse cavalry days, _____ [inaudible 1:07:27], whereas armor would wear armor gold, cavalry had red and white...same with the air...same colors for air.

Clarke: Well it's interesting, because you spent so much time doing that over and over and getting everybody ready and doing it over and over again, but it's very easy to breeze on by this stuff, especially in an oral history, but you've got that knowledge, you know...

Ruggerio: Repetition.

Clarke: 'Cause my question to you, to follow that up is, if they dropped you into a cav unit right now and you had to do training, or you're the...you are the commander of the 12th again right now, you could probably, with some updating of your knowledge about the technology they're using, you could probably do the same thing, couldn't you?

Ruggerio: Absolutely. The only thing that would change would be the technology. Yeah. Larger guns, more thermal devices, more night-vision devices, more of that stuff, you educate yourself on that stuff...you know, the fact that...you could be out...you always hear the old guys say, "Put me back in there, send me in coach." But I think the soldier today is a smarter guy, probably more adaptable...of course, he or she has the [available] technology, you know? It's just a matter of doing it. I chuckle when they talk about today -- this is another offshoot -- talk about women doing certain combat jobs, right? I'm probably the first tank commander...when I had a battalion command, I took an AG woman -- major -- downrange, and she qualified in a tank. You know? We took her through the training.

Clarke: Tell me a little bit about that.

Ruggerio: Yeah, she's a retired major general today.

Clarke: Well let's talk about this experience a little bit. This is what I'm going after, this is the story. Okay, tell me about how you took a...

Ruggerio: This was back in the '79-'80 timeframe, I was commanding a tank battalion in Korea...she happened to be a woman, her name was Pat Hickerson, Major General (retired), AG by business, she was working in the G-1 of the 2nd Infantry Division as an administrator, and...you know, she wanted to educate herself, she wanted to get educated with tanks, [thus, I invited her to] "Come on down, we'll

take you downrange." We took her out on Rodriguez Tank Range in Korea and we put her through her paces. And she gave the commands, and she fired the main guns, she hit the targets...she did everything she was supposed to do as a tank commander. And she loved it! [Laughs]. So when I hear about women doing the job today, that's not anything new, they've always been capable of doing the job? Just give them the opportunity...I was happy to see this young captain was commanding a combat infantry unit in the Middle East. I think that's great. She's capable of doing it. And I...as a tank battalion commander, the other side of the coin, whenever any of the tanks that we had needed second echelon maintenance, above and beyond what we're capable of doing at the battalion level, and we went to the next echelon, there was one young woman who worked at the second echelon and I'd go to her boss, my counterpart who was her boss, and I said, "I only want her working on our tanks," 'cause she was so knowledgeable, and she knew what she was doing. This was back in '79...

Clarke: How common do you think that is, up until this change? I mean, is this just something acknowledged in the military, and really what had to get over was some tradition, or what do you think is the deal there?

Ruggerio: Well, I think it's two things. Perception, for the most part, that they weren't...their dexterity was different, and they couldn't do these things, it was a lot of perception, but given the task, given the opportunity, and given the training, they're capable of doing the same thing a guy's doing? I don't see any major issues. There might be some lifting in certain areas...just don't put her in that position. Put her in positions where she can perform to her ability, and as long as she can pass the PT test. There are guys who can't pass the PT test.

Clarke: That is true.

Ruggerio: I think it's wonderful that we're doing it, the Dutch have done it for years, you know?

Clarke: The Russians.

Ruggerio: The Russians, the Israelis...look at the Israelis! Their women are fine, fine soldiers. And so I don't have any qualms. But anyway, Pat Hickerson was probably the first woman that I know of to go downrange in a tank.

Clarke: That's a pretty cool story. Thank you for telling me that story. This is why I dig, say, "Tell me about the training! Tell me a little bit more...explain to me what a cavalry unit is, namely, what training is." Because if you don't get into a little bit

of those details, it gets...I don't get you talking about those memories, triggering those memories. So, speaking of memories, you're commander of the 12th Cav, and I asked you questions like this during part one of your interview, is there somebody, other than Major General Hickerson (retired) who is somebody that you remember from that time period who you served with that had an impact on you or maybe you mentored, or...?

Ruggerio: Well...from that era? From the 12th Cav era?

Clarke: Sure.

Ruggerio: Well, my boss at the time was Major General (retired) Tom Tait, big giant of a guy -- huge -- carried a big stick -- walked around with a big stick -- he was one of the guys who didn't get into your stuff, you know...you could do your thing, be your...do what you wanted, keep him informed, you know...great commander. And I liked him, 'cause he let you do your job. So I always tell one funny story having to do with...you know, anytime you have officers involved, and all my students...all the students were under my purview, so if anybody screwed up and had to go to the general for some reason, the chain of command went with him, so...one guy, I had a young West Point officer -- a captain, big burly captain -- he got picked up for speeding on his motorcycle, driving through the town of West Point, Kentucky, right outside of Fort Knox. And the cops were always out for Fort Knox soldiers, you know? So, he got a ticket, the MPs...MP report came in, we got this young captain driving...speeding through West Point, so...the general, you have to appear before the general. So the general says, "Young man," he said...here we are, the brigade commander, the regimental commander, and the battalion commander, the company commander, the whole chain of command was there with this young captain, he was a captain. "I have this report that says that you were driving 90 miles an hour through the town of West Point on your motorcycle. Is that true?" And he stood at attention, and he said, "No, sir. I was doing 110." [Both laugh]. And I thought the general was gonna lose it. So that's..."I was doin' 110." So that's the kinda stuff you had to deal with when you were dealing with student officers. So that was kind of a fun thing. And then we had a lot of military etiquette that we put them through...you know, the dining-ins...the formal dining-ins -- what was required, how you set it up -- we taught them that kind of stuff...so from the social side of things, we tried to educate them as well. And then, of course, young captains and lieutenants have wives; the wives were involved and taught what their responsibilities were, if they were a working wife, that's fine. In my era, growing up as a young officer, wives didn't

work, they played the game, and in the modern Army today you have working wives. You gotta deal with that as well. So some of them are supportive, some of them are not supportive. But you can't chastise a young officer for his wife not being supportive in terms of activities if she's a working lady as well, so that kind of tradition has gone by the wayside.

Clarke: That's very interesting. So for the wives who were not in the military and were not working -- maybe they had kids or whatever, but they were not working official jobs -- they had training on how to be an Army wife...

Ruggerio: How to be an Army wife.

Clarke: But nowadays, it's not something you can count on. That's very interesting.

Ruggerio: You can't count on it, no. Nor can you chastise somebody for not.

Clarke: That's interesting, that's an interesting change of pace.

Ruggerio: So at that point at Fort Knox...I had a great time as a commander, left that...

Clarke: Well there's a little...there's a little snippet that...about your time at Fort Knox and that's your unionized civilian maintenance section in the Army.

Ruggerio: Yeah, that's right. Because of the training that was involved, and the number of vehicles involved with that particular type of an organization -- school brigade, so to speak, a school regiment -- you have to have a maintenance staff, but you can't staff it completely with soldiers, so you have a civilianized group for maintenance, the second...second and third echelon maintenance being done on an installation that size...these guys were all unionized -- civilians -- about 1,000 of them total made up that group, so they belonged to me...and that regiment was the only unionized regiment in the Army. So...'cause some of the southern states, they didn't have to deal with unions. But you'd get...Fort Knox had a union.

Clarke: So what was that like?

Ruggerio: We had a good rapport, you know...I'd invite the union leaders, or the maintenance leaders, of the groups, the foreman and the supervisors, so they'd all be included in my staff meetings...and I had one guy say to me one time, he wanted to reserve a parking spot -- 'cause the commander always had a reserved parking spot -- he wanted to reserve a parking spot, and I said, "Well after you put 25 years in, then come see me and maybe we'll make a deal and we'll

negotiate a parking place for you, but otherwise there's no reserved parking places." [Laughs]. But that was the only complaint I ever had. Yeah.

Clarke: People and their parking spots. Well, as kind of a summary to the Fort Knox part of your life, what would you say is the...looking back on that particular experience, what do you think you got the most out of?

Ruggerio: Well, the training side of the house, because of my background as a division G-3, my background as a squadron S-3 -- operations guy -- I felt more than super-qualified to train those guys, and that's why I told you the story about the...the fact about the...at one time that we had nine four-star generals and four of 'em had worked for me as junior officers, I felt like I was a good trainer, 'cause I trained these guys pretty well. And I love that part of the opportunity, just...you know, you train people, you teach people, and you mentor people. I...I feel like I've mentored a lot of great young soldiers in my day. One of the things I did as the regimental commander was I had breakfast every single morning in my two-year tenure with eight different soldiers in that regiment. We'd run in the morning, we'd go back to the shower, go to breakfast, and I'd go down -- no commanders -- I just would sit with eight different soldiers. I did that for two years 'cause we had so many different soldiers. We had 8,000 total people in that regiment, and so...broken down into five different squadrons, you know, so you have to go from squadron to squadron to squadron, and soldiers would tell you things that, with no commanders, you know...and I always prided myself on the fact that I would always get back to a question. You know, whether I did some research and went back to them, it may not have been the answer they were looking for, but it was an answer...you know, I gave them an answer. Why certain things are certain ways.

Clarke: What did you hear the most?

Ruggerio: People wondering about repair parts. "How come I can't get this, or can't get that?" And some...most of them...most of 'em were pretty well resolved, it was improper processing of requests and paperwork and things like that. The other...the other thing we'd get questions on is, "What can't we have alcohol in the barracks?" and that kind of stuff. [Coughs]. You know, just...mostly...I call it "nit-noid" stuff. But you had to get an answer back, you know...regulations say you can't do this, this, and this, we don't wanna have a lot of unrest or fights or things going on as a result of alcohol, so you keep...and I'd say...okay, we would rather be drinkin' on post, I'd say, "That's fine, you can drink at the clubs and the facilities, but don't drive, make sure you have a ride from somebody, if you need

a ride, call a cab or whatever, 'cause you can do that much more easily on a military installation, there's no need to get picked up for DUI, you know?" Then I'd always tell people, "If you go off the installation and you're gonna drink, you make sure you have one person in that car who's not drinking." So, things like that. But we...we were pretty much resolved. Speeding was an issue. [Clarke laughs]. We'd get tickets for it, things like that, but...that's a difference, overseas versus US. You have a little more freedom of action, here in the US, with your life than you did overseas. Less restricted here.

Clarke: Well, it's quite an insight to know that if you get a speeding ticket in the military you're not only accountable to the civilian side of law, you're getting dragged in front of everybody in the others side of the house too, saying, "Hey, what's going on here?"

Ruggerio: Absolutely.

Clarke: So it's a double-whammy.

Ruggerio: It's a double-whammy. Could be a double-whammy. That's right. But Fort Knox was an extraordinary place, a wonderful...wonderful experience for my kids, a couple of my children went to school at Fort Knox...'cause Fort Knox had one of the only high schools on a military installation here [in United States]. There aren't many high schools on military posts anymore. They were fortunate enough to do that.

Clarke: So your kids went to Fort Knox High School.

Ruggerio: Two of 'em did.

Clarke: Two of them did, wow. They then carry that with them for the rest of their lives. So...

Ruggerio: We went from Fort Knox to Fort Monroe, Virginia. Headquarters TRADOC. And that's when I assumed the role of director of officer training.

Clarke: And is this how you ended up in the People's Republic of Hungary?

Ruggerio: That's correct.

Clarke: Okay, so let's talk about this.

Ruggerio: One of the responsibilities was when we were there we had three directorates, basically. We had the officer training directorate, we had the enlisted training

directorate, and then we had the individual training directorate. So what I did before I left was recommend --after my two years -- recommend that we combine the officer and the enlisted, and we call it individual. Because training is training, whether it's an officer or enlisted, and because of my experience on the non-commissioned officer professional development...there's professionals for both enlisted and for officers, so...different schools, but the same levels, you know what I'm saying? We did that, I eliminated my job when I retired, so basically we combined 'em. However, while I was there -- I was traveling probably three weeks a month, visiting all the Army schools, service schools, who were under my purview in terms of the officer training -- whether it was the adjutant general's school, the finance school, the infantry school, the artillery school...you know, all of 'em. We had to go visit and make sure the curriculums are aligned the way they're supposed to be, if they had questions about training, and issues with training, and this is how we're going to resolve them and then bringing them back to the staff and that sort of thing. We'd also visit training sites in Europe. And we'd visit training aspects anywhere we had military, overseas, Korea, Japan ...we did that. Then, one of the things that came to light was that they were looking for -- in Warsaw Pact nations -- they were looking for a little more of alliances. More training alliances. We were the first US military invited to the People's Republic of Hungary since the '56 Revolution, and this was in '89, 1989. There was an Air Force brigadier general, an Army brigadier general, and myself. We went, and the Air Force general briefed on training/maintaining the US Air Force, and we briefed on training...Army general, briefed on the administrative side of the Army and how it functioned, and I briefed on the training side of...training and maintaining side. We briefed the Hungarian Military Academy. Another...wonderful experiences. It was just the fact that what we briefed them on was not classified. We didn't give them anything we shouldn't have given them. You can probably read them in the Armed Forces Journal or something like that. We briefed them on our programs. So we got to Hungary...it was very interesting. We flew to Frankfurt, and Frankfurt to Budapest. And I learned, at the time, I didn't know that, that Buda and Pest were two separate cities with two separate governments, I didn't know that when I arrived there, but subsequently found out. The commander of the Hungarian military school...academy...came to us and asked if it would be okay with us if the Russian students could attend our briefings. We said, "Sure, absolutely." There were probably ten Russian lieutenants at this academy. The Russians, of course, were occupying Hungary, at the time. The Hungarians and the Russians had no love for each other. And the strange part about it was, when

the Russian soldiers had free time, they didn't go into the towns at all. They stayed to themselves or went back to Russia. That was really something that surprised me. You know, different from a GI, a GI would go to Fort Knox and he'd go to Louisville...they didn't do that... We briefed and they had interpreters, and these splendid, splendid students, they were very inquisitive, very nice, and...funny, funny story that goes along with it, a little anecdote, is they had a reception for us one evening, cocktail reception, and these Russian students were all invited too, I said, "We wouldn't exclude them, we would like to have them present." They were young... officers, and I remember this young first lieutenant...Russian first lieutenant spoke fluent English -- fluent, you wouldn't know he was a Russian -- and he was the son of the ambassador to Australia from Russia. We were talking, while having a few cocktails, we're talking, and he said, "You guys in the United States are funny." He said, "You have a lot of jargon you use." And I said, "Well, yeah, we do have jargon, I assume you do too." And he said, "Oh yeah, we do. But we like the one that you use is talking about 'the test of true love.'" I said, "Yeah, we use that terminology, it's...When we're talking about our spouses or our girlfriends or significant others or whatever." And he said, "You don't really have the meaning that we do." And I asked, "What are you talking about?" He said, "I'm the only one that passed the test of true love." I [responded], "What do you mean? How do you mean that you're the only one?" He said, "When you get on a train, and you travel for fifty-five hours to visit your mother in law, that's the test of true love." [Laughs]. And I just...I just thought we were going to lose...the whole team was there, we just lost it. I said, "You're absolutely correct, we can't touch that one." [Laughs]. That's what he said. How he visited his mother in law...fifty-five hours on train. [Laughs].

Clarke: Oh man, that's a huge country to travel by train on. Wow.

Ruggerio: So...we just laughed so hard. Very inquisitive.

Clarke: Well it was '89, so things were a little different in Russia then.

Ruggerio: Oh yeah.

Clarke: So the wall's come down at this point, or not yet?

Ruggerio: We were there when the wall came down, in November of '89.

Clarke: And you talked a little bit about this, yes.

Ruggerio: Yes, we were there.

Clarke: But talk to me a little more, 'cause we didn't really get...you mentioned it...

Ruggerio: While we were there...the interesting part, first of all, was when I left the United States -- I flew halfway across the Atlantic Ocean -- I realized I had left my American Express traveler's checks on my dresser. So we got to Frankfurt, I called American Express on the 800 number..."Not to worry, sir." That's what they said. Got to Budapest and the counterparts picked us up at the airport, first thing they did was greet us with a tray of shots of plum brandy at seven o'clock in the morning when we got there...and my counterpart was a lieutenant colonel -- cavalry, airborne cavalryman -- and he said, "We must go to an American Express office, we have a message that you needed to go." They drove us to the American Express office, we went in there, again, another shot of plum brandy, and some breakfast doughnuts and coffee and stuff, in 15 minutes they got me new checks. Just like that. In Budapest. I thought that was fantastic. I wrote a nice letter to American Express thanking them for...that was...you know the old adage, "Don't leave home without it," but they took good care of me. And...so [on with my comments] this counterpart of mine was a lieutenant colonel, cavalry -- airborne man -- and we're talking about comparing notes. And I said, "This is how you find out what intelligence is all about, and intelligence gathering is all about." He said, "Oh, we have a lot in common, you're a paratrooper and you're a cavalryman, I too," and he says, "You have four children, I have four children." And I [agreed]...and this is where he caught himself, or didn't catch himself. He says, "And both of our wives are schoolteachers." That was nowhere listed in my resume. [Laughs uneasily]. That was not in my resume, that was not in my bio, it wasn't anywhere; the fact that my wife, at the time, was a schoolteacher. That was not listed. [Laughs]. So I said...

Clarke: Did you mention this, or did you just leave that alone?

Ruggerio: Oh, I let it go. I let it go. But I...in the military hotel that we were being recorded -- room was "bugged". I would wear my headset out in the morning to jog. And when I'd come back, they had a little valet outside, he would always greet us at the door with a shot of plum brandy so early in the morning. And...good thing we're not staying forever, my liver won't be able to take the course. But anyway, I got inside and I still had my headset on, and I picked up a beeping. And they had a little bug, and it was mounted on the back of a trunk type closet that they had. So I [pointed] to that my colleagues, and I pointed to the thing.

Clarke: Oh, you found it 'cause you had your headset on, just completely inadvertent.

Ruggerio: Yes. The way the frequency was being pulled. Yes. And so when we talked about...certain things [we avoided certain subjects]...The Hungarians were wonderful hosts. They gave us a lot of tours. They took us to a lot of their schools...some of their service schools. They took us to a tank range, and we were able to crawl all over and in and out of the T-72 [Russia's best tank] at the time, but the counterpart says, "Unfortunately, we don't have enough time in the schedule to shoot." We didn't get to shoot the tank. They didn't want us to see what it was capable of doing, even though we knew what it was capable of doing. But we got to crawl in and out of it, and that sort of stuff. And then they gave us trinkets, like...they gave us the military hat, the emblem...I know one of the emblems had the red star, and the commandant said, "You hold that, that's gonna be a collector's item someday." I still have it.

Clarke: He wasn't wrong.

Ruggerio: He wasn't wrong. And then of course when the wall came down, the excitement was...everyone was ecstatic in Budapest, I mean the...[Hungarians] had no love for the Russians, and the Russians had no love for them, but when that wall came down they were very happy, and partying, and...so they knew that something was gonna be great for them, and they just...

Clarke: So, you're there...the wall comes down while you're there, and basically a big party erupts.

Ruggerio: A big party erupted, yes.

Clarke: How long did that last?

Ruggerio: Well, the rest of the time that we were there they were still partying. We probably stayed...oh, a week and a half longer after the wall came down.

Clarke: What do you think that symbolized to them?

Ruggerio: Probably...freedom of action, I would suspect. Because they were...even the commandant wasn't as stern...wasn't as rigid. He started to loosen up, and so did our counterparts, you know. They were... [Coughs] they were loosening up a little bit in their dialogue and...more jovial, not so much as formal. Initially they were kind of formal. They loosened up a little bit at the cocktail reception for us, and at some of the meals they would loosen up a little bit. During the tours and the specific visits they were pretty straightforward. Professional! But it was very interesting...a great experience [with the Hungarians]...After [Hungary] the other

thing...I did, I was a member of a joint US-Italian training committee. That was also very interesting, because we would meet one quarter in Italy and meet in the US, and we'd talk about joint training, and you know it was funny because I was reading a little bit of that Navy SEAL book on your table [coughs], and they talked about the Italian version of the underwater guys...swimmers who'd deploy with archaic breathing materiel and ride torpedoes, and place 'em, you know? And when we were over there joint training we got to spend a lot of time with the Alpini forces...the soldiers...and they were conscripted for...battalions were drafted for a two-year period, and the most physically fit ones were selected to be Alpinis. They were...they spent time [training on] skiing in July in the Alps, which was a nice little perk, and they'd put us up in nice hotels. We couldn't...we couldn't come up with the one-upmanship on our hospitalities like they did for us, you know, we'd take them to an officers' club or something like that, but they'd take us to a grandiose hotel in Florence...five-star hotel at the Ponte Vecchio, and...you know, we just couldn't match that. [Laughs].

Clarke: When they were back in the States, or on base?

Ruggerio: Over there. We were over there.

Clarke: Over there, yeah.

Ruggerio: And they took us to a military hotel, which was grandiose. It was almost like a Ritz. They took good care of us over there. We'd talk about joint training and we'd send some of our [soldiers] we'd send a liaison from [Training and Doctrine Command i.e TRADOC]...I know we had two liaisons from Italy come to Fort Knox, and we had some Somalians at service schools [around out country, as well.]

Clarke: So when they would come to Fort Knox, did you find that your ability to entertain them the same way they entertained you...at the same limited capacity? When they were in the States?

Ruggerio: When they were in the States, and I was a commander at Fort Knox, before, we had Italians, too. I entertained the Italians, I entertained the Somalians, I entertained the Saudis...you know, as the regimental commander, I had those folks at my house and did some of that. You know, we put 'em up in BOQs...except the ones that were married had quarters. We had nice quarters for them. But the ones that came unaccompanied, you know, would stay in a BOQ...[Laughs].

Clarke: I was just...I'm curious about that. So you'd go over there and be treated like royalty and then you'd come over and, "Here's your BOQ." That sounds...

Ruggerio: A little different. But we spent a lot of time...I did that for two years, so...part of my job is the officer training director, so when I told you earlier I was traveling a lot, I did travel a lot.

Clarke: You just traveled for two years straight. Everywhere.

Ruggerio: Everywhere.

Clarke: Including overseas.

Ruggerio: Yes, and the Italians had carabinieri, dressed in civilian clothes, as our bodyguards, so to speak, when we traveled over there. It was pretty interesting. You didn't worry about it, 'cause they were...like their SWAT team, so to speak. We had guys protecting us...? 'Cause you never knew. You just never know. I really enjoyed that, and then...just so many different experiences. But one of the other interesting facets about being... the officer training director, all of the liaison officers fell under my umbrella there, and they would bring officers over from their countries...Australia was a good one, because he would always bring Foster's beer and lamb...you know, lamb chops and veal chops...and the guys from Somalia would come over, and you're not realizing, they were looking for Italian restaurants because...you know, Italy occupied [and colonized] Somalia for years and years, so they wanted their Italian food, it was hard for me to comprehend, "What do you want Italian food?" Then I finally understood. 'Cause they grew up on it. So...

Clarke: Fascinating.

Ruggerio: Fascinating, yeah.

Clarke: It's not the first thing that would come to mind, you're right.

Ruggerio: No, not with Somalians. [Laughs]. But we had that, and subsequent to that job as officer training director, I retired.

Clarke: So tell me a little bit about retirement. What was that like for you? 'Cause that's quite an experience. How old are you at this point? You're 50ish?

Ruggerio: 50ish. 51.

Clarke: You're gonna retire, you're still relatively young, you're...you know, you gotta come up with a whole other thing to do...

Ruggerio: The perception was that I had done all the "ticket punching" jobs that you really would like to have done. The only job that I really didn't partake in and would've liked to -- I didn't have the opportunity -- was to be a division chief of staff. And because General Thurman wanted his TRADOC commanders running TRADOC, I didn't have that opportunity. Although I was offered the opportunity, but I didn't...I was not allowed to accept it. I had a friend of mine who was getting ready to retire, and we were walking home from lunch one day and he said, "I'm getting ready to retire, got a job opportunity in Chicago." I said, "Oh yeah?" He says, "I'm gonna go to work for Deloitte Touche." I said, "What's that?" He says, "Well that's an accounting firm." I said, "Well what're you gonna do for them?" He said, "I'm gonna be their operations guy." He said, "But I don't think I'm gonna be able to do it 'cause my wife doesn't want to go to Chicago." I said, "Well, why don't you tell them you know a guy that might be interested?" And, lo and behold, he did. Two days later I got a call, four days later I flew to Chicago, four days after that I had a phone call back home, and was offered a job.

Clarke: Wow.

Ruggerio: And...so I said, "I'll have to see what I can do about out processing, when would you like me there?" "Two weeks." I said, "Well the Army doesn't work that fast." So I said, "Give me an opportunity," and I was just getting ready to go to Washington to sit on a promotion board -- lieutenant colonel promotion board -- and I said, "Let me see what I can do." I got to the board and started performing my duties and one of the guys who was monitoring the board and facilitating the board was a guy who had worked for me before. He handled the out-processing and stuff like that, I said, "How quickly can you get me out?" He said, "When do you need to be out?" I said, "Two more weeks." He said, "See if you can get three." And he got me out in three weeks.

Clarke: Wow.

Ruggerio: I got out of the Army on a Thursday, got in my little Karmann Ghia and I drove to Chicago, and started working Monday.

Clarke: So you didn't really have a lot of time to really kind of contemplate your retirement, or...?

Ruggerio: I didn't do the retirement thing, I just finished the documents and then, a month later I went to Norwich and had my retirement ceremony at Norwich, where it all started.

Clarke: Okay, so that...I was wondering. So who was there?

Ruggerio: At Norwich?

Clarke: Yeah, at your party.

Ruggerio: Oh gosh, a lot of my colleagues came. My family was there, of course. The president of Norwich at the time was Russ Todd...and I had also had the opportunity to work with Russ Todd at Fort Hood when he was a brigade commander. [Coughs]. So our history went back a while, too. So...a few of my college classmates were there. A lot of my colleagues were there...and Tim Donovan, who I grew up with -- and subsequently became the commandant at Norwich -- was there. So I had a good turnout. Plus, it was wonderful to see the cadet corps. They did a nice parade for me. And...it was just super! And then, I came back and went to work. And never missed a lick. I worked for Deloitte. But the hardest part of that transition was figuring out what to wear in the morning. I couldn't convince them to wear Battle Dress Uniforms. [Both laugh]. That was the toughest part of my transition...was figuring out what to wear in the morning.

Clarke: "What the heck do I wear?"

Ruggerio: Yeah, "What do I wear?"

Clarke: After all that time, knowing what to wear.

Ruggerio: Never had to figure that before. I [worked for Deloitte] for seven years, and then, subsequently picked up enough insight...I wasn't gonna become a partner at Deloitte 'cause I wasn't a CPA, so I stepped off on my own and did some reorganizing in the staff at Deloitte and basically eliminated my position again, and started off on my own. Started a little relocation consulting firm, and I helped companies find new space in Chicago, and helped people move, and I did that for seventeen years, and then I closed the door of my little business, I went to a part time gig at Orvis, and I'm still doing that.

Clarke: Alright, so something happened to you at Deloitte, and it has to do with your airborne pin, right?

Ruggerio: Yes.

Clarke: Let's talk a little bit about that, because there's a little bit of history here.

Ruggerio: Yes, little bit of history. When I was the administrator at Deloitte, I happened to go up into the lobby and there was a gentleman standing there...and happened to notice my little airborne lapel pin, and we started a conversation. And the dialogue basically said, "I'd like to talk to you a little bit more about your military experience," because we had both shared some military experiences -- he, at the time, was airborne -- so he saw the 101st, the...so we talked and talked, and I gave him my card, and he said, "I'd like to come over and chit-chat some more," so I said, "Give me a call," and he did, and we came over one Friday afternoon...about two in the afternoon, we had a cup of coffee, and I think before we realized it, it was almost eight o'clock that night, and we talked about every aspect, the Illinois Guard historian perspective, we talked about the jumping perspective, we talked about Vietnam a little bit, and then I bounced a little bit about Norwich, and was well educated on that subject, and I asked if there's any interest at all of maybe serving on a board at a military college -- the oldest military college in the United States. And, lo and behold, there was an interest and [the rest is history]...

Clarke: So Colonel Pritzker was then...was she, at the time...was she the Guard historian at the time?

Ruggerio: Correct.

Clarke: Okay, so she's down at...

Ruggerio: Springfield.

Clarke: Springfield, yeah.

Ruggerio: Yeah, she was down at Springfield, and had a vast knowledge about Norwich, ...in fact, I always tell the story...when I invited president Schneider, who had just recently become the president, out to meet Colonel Pritzker, we sat around and, of course, Schneider was relatively new, I think Colonel Pritzker knew a lot more about Norwich than Schneider did at that point. [Clarke laughs].

Clarke: That's not surprising.

Ruggerio: And there was an interest there, and subsequently Freddie Kreitzberg, who was the chairman of the board, came out to meet Colonel Pritzker, and there was a

rapport established, and an invite was presented to Colonel Pritzker to join our board of trustees. And subsequently, Norwich is very beholding to Colonel Pritzker for her...

Clarke: Well, she has an honorary doctorate.

Ruggerio: Honorary doctorate.

Clarke: And she's a major part of the university.

Ruggerio: Major part of the university.

Clarke: Nowadays.

Ruggerio: Major part of the university.

Clarke: Proactive, major part. And we're doing a lot to try to incorporate the relationship between the Pritzker Military Museum & Library, which, of course, Colonel Pritzker founded, and Norwich...in a lot of different ways.

Ruggerio: And Colonel Pritzker, behind the scenes, at Norwich, is...

Clarke: Oh, it's...yeah. She...well, she named the Sullivan Museum after Gordon Sullivan. She could've named it after herself, but she named it after Gordon Sullivan.

Ruggerio: And she also helps some of the students in need.

Clarke: Absolutely.

Ruggerio: And ran that scientific expedition to Antarctica for a student.

Clarke: Yeah.

Ruggerio: So there are a lot of hidden things that...very humble, on her part, to be so supportive to that great university. And that great university is very beholding to her generosity and I too am, because I feel a major part of ...[connecting Col. Pritzker with Norwich]

Clarke: Well you're kind of responsible for it, in a way. I mean, obviously it was a big team that came to bear upon that relationship, and she had to participate and a lot of other people did too, but had you not met in the lobby of Deloitte...and she noticed your 101st Airborne pin...

Ruggerio: That's right.

Clarke: And it's funny how history is like that.

Ruggerio: And she and I were subsequent neighbors in Park Row, downtown. And so we did do a little socialization down there while she was a member of...living down there, and I was living down there. So...yeah, we go back a number of years now. This is quite a few years.

Clarke: That's a good story. I think it's a very good story.

Ruggerio: It's a great story. And she has been such a wonderful, wonderful asset to the Norwich team, it's just [been spectacular havin her on board].

Clarke: Well, she's helped Rich a lot. His leadership there, he's a great leader, I think. And he's coming up and retiring in...what? A couple years. Nineteen, twenty, I think, maybe? It depends on timing and...

Ruggerio: The bicentennial is in 2019, so...

Clarke: Right. I think he's gonna do then...

Ruggerio: One more year.

Clarke: One year after that, so...2020.

Ruggerio: It'll take a lot to replace him.

Clarke: I...it's a good...he's got an incredible tenure, and finger on the pulse, even to this day, so...a lot of energy there. Just a great...Well that's quite a...quite a...well, I wouldn't say conclusion to your oral history, but I would say that that is a...that's a...there's something about the way you've lived your life that everything you've done...that's probably had some kind of thing where you probably paid it forward a little bit from...I would...it's almost like I kinda wanna go out and find some of the people who knew you back when you were training them...and what you meant to them, because there are...you know there are a bunch of people out there like that, that...

Ruggerio: You wanna talk a little bit about Rolling Thunder?

Clarke: Yes, let's...let's spend... 'cause we've...we've somehow talked for two hours again.

Ruggerio: Should we take a break?

Clarke: Yes, sure. Yeah.

CUT [1:53:32] - [1:59:07]

Clarke: Well you're 78 years old and you're still riding motorcycles around.

Ruggerio: I'm still riding motorcycles. [Laughs]. That's scary, isn't it?

Clarke: You can't jump out of airplanes, and you can't do whatever it is...what did you do when you were 48, again? You did the...

Ruggerio: Air assault.

Clarke: Yeah.

Ruggerio: You know, the interesting thing...I had an opportunity, at one of the air and water shows -- probably...several years ago -- to jump with the Golden Knights. And I have a defibrillator, so I said, "I better run it by my doc, just in case." And I asked him...I should've probably jumped and then told him. [Clarke laughs]. He said, "Are you crazy?" He said, "We can't afford to take the chance to...you might fracture a wire, and we don't wanna do that." So... [Laughs].

Clarke: Aw, man.

Ruggerio: But I was ready.

Ruggerio: And I was...I was well into my 60s, you know. If George Bush Senior could jump at 90... [Laughs].

Clarke: Yeah, no kidding.

Ruggerio: Anyway...

Clarke: So, you do an awful lot...you know, post-retirement you've stayed involved in a lot of different things, obviously Norwich. You've been a part of the PMML since it was a tiny little office...

Ruggerio: Yeah. Way back.

Clarke: So kind of what it's turned into now, which is...you helped me when I had to do a whole bunch of work with the move, and that was an incredible thing you helped out with. That was...helped out on so many different levels.

Ruggerio: Big fun project.

Clarke: Yeah, yeah, so kinda de...decommissioning the old space and moving into the new space, and that was quite the job. But you also are very active with Rolling

Thunder. And that's more than just riding motorcycles around, there's a whole lot of spirit and good things that that organization does. Why don't you tell me a little about your role and what you're doing with 'em.

Ruggerio: Well, I've been involved with Rolling Thunder now since...oh gosh, over ten...over ten years. And my current role is I'm the vice president of the chapter one...Illinois chapter one. We have three chapters in the state of Illinois, I think there are around eighty-nine or ninety chapters nationwide. But we have three [in Illinois]. We have chapter one -- which is based out of Warrenville-- chapter two -- which is based out of Libertyville -- and chapter three -- which is down in the Peoria area, and maybe even further south. In chapter one, we have about eighty members, about sixty-eight of 'em, sixty-nine of 'em are probably active at any one time. And...basically, what we do is...our primary mission is to keep alive the prisoner of war/MIA issue. Educate the public -- and that's the primary function of Rolling Thunder -- secondary role is to support any and all veterans' activities within the state of Illinois that we possibly can. And we do a lot with the state of Illinois, we have a great rapport with the director, Erica Jeffries, and we have a...we just recently installed a chair of honor...the most recent one was at the Cook County Chambers, couple...two weeks ago. And the other one was -- most recent -- last January we put one into Soldier Field. We do that chair of honor to keep that chair visible to the public so they know what the prisoner of war/MIA issue is about, and that we're still...we still have unaccountable people. 90,000 in all wars, 2,300 or 2,400 of them have to do with the Vietnam War, about 70 from the state of Illinois still unaccounted for from the Vietnam conflict. Anyway, we do a lot of that work, and then we help veterans and assistance...we deal with the local county veterans commissions -- veterans assistance commissions -- and if after all else fails for them getting subsidy for veterans who are in need, they'll come to us, and we, on a one-time basis, will evaluate...we have a committee that evaluates their applications, and we will subsidize...we won't provide the money directly to the veteran, if a veteran needs automobile repair to get to and from his job we'll pay the repair bill. If a veteran is short because of some conflict or issue with monthly rent, we'll pay that month's rent. We'll do that for a month, and possibly two, until that person can get back on his or her feet. So last year we gave about \$20,000 away. All of our monies are garnered through donations and grants. I write the grant proposals in conjunction with one of my colleagues...two of us work on grant proposals. And we have no paid staff at all, we're all volunteers. Our only expenses are taxes -- we pay a \$30 fee for some sort of audit process, you know...one of our members, he has to pay an application fee or something for

audit registration. That's our only expense we have. 97 cents out of every dollar we acquire goes back into veteran's programs. And we support the Manteno Veterans' Home, the LaSalle Veterans' Home, the Midwest Shelter for Homeless Vets, we've purchased some items for Hines Hospital, that they haven't been able to get through the government, we have an anonymous benefactor who allows us to apply for a grant every two years, which has been very lucrative...so that's the kind of thing...and then we do...our money garnering is through donations, our fundraiser is we do a gun bash, where we raffle guns once or...we've done it once a year, we're thinking about doing it twice a year...and we're able to...we sell 700 tickets at \$50 each, so if Ken Clarke buys a ticket, and Ken Clarke's name is drawn out of the hopper and he wins, his name goes back into the hopper so he can subsequently win again. Last year we had three people win twice, and the interesting part is...we do eight guns an hour for four hours.

Clarke: That's pretty cool.

Ruggerio: Yeah, pretty cool. And...

Clarke: What kind of guns?

Ruggerio: All kinds.

Clarke: Shotguns, handguns...?

Ruggerio: Shotguns, handguns, pistols, AR-15, you know...just...we purchase all our guns -- they're not donated -- and...so we pay for the guns, we usually make \$15,000 to \$20,000 on the tickets, so...and we only sell that limited amount, we only sell 700 tickets. So...so anyway, that's our big fundraiser. We used to raffle a motorcycle, but everybody raffles a motorcycle, so we stopped doing that. So in conjunction with our gun bash, we do a 50-50. So, we'll sell X amount of tickets, and whatever we garner, half of that goes to...

Clarke: How do you sell them? Just internet, or email, or...

Ruggerio: Yes, we have them on the internet. We have them...people carry...we carry 'em, and sell 'em...we'll have a weekend at a...with a Harley dealership, we'll set up...

Clarke: That makes total sense to me.

Ruggerio: ...They have a bike show up at Rosemont, we set up a booth there. Any time we have an opportunity to set up a booth we'll do that. We'll just...we'll occupy the

booth for a few hours and see what we can sell. At any rate, Rolling Thunder is a great group, about...I'm guessing 35% are veterans, [a few who don't ride], the remainder are just volunteers or people interested in [our mission]. We have several bike gatherings a year, we have...our big Thunder Run is every...this last year it was on September 11th, so we called it the Patriot's Run last year, but this year will be Sunday, September 10th. It's always the second Sunday of the month. And...and we just charge \$20 for a bike, we have an 80 mile run, and then we have a big barbecue afterward, have music and that kind of stuff. Vendors will be there. So we raise money selling raffle tickets and what we sell for the bike run. It's just a very generous group of people with their time, fortunately we have some expertise in accounting and taxes and things like that, and our president is a good paper guy, and provides for pretty good leadership, and...and they're just an active group...We get together and we'll take a little ride on a Sunday or a Saturday or something, and just...whoever wants to ride signs up and we go. Then we have a big group that leave, for Memorial Day, to the Wall...they'll go to the [Vietnam] Wall [in D.C.] , to ride to the Wall. I did the...the last one I did was probably...almost 10 years ago now since I made that ride because of other conflicts. It just...you can only go so many places. We have a group that goes out there, and then we have...our chapter has been selected...I can't tell you how many years now, we've been selected as the chapter in the country to ride gold star widows and moms to the wall. They'll actually get on our bikes as a rider and our group will lead...we'll take them right to the wall. From the Pentagon parking lot. So there's about...they figured last year they had 700,000 bikes.

Clarke: That's big, yeah.

Ruggerio: That's big. And you get a perspective, if you're familiar with the Pentagon at all, when you fill the parking lots with motorcycles, you know that's big. And that...it's normally a fifty minute ride to the Wall from the Pentagon parking lot, we had six abreast, left at 12 o'clock, and the last bike got to the Wall at a quarter to five. Six abreast. So that's...

Clarke: [Laughs]. Just a continuous...

Ruggerio: Just a stream of bikes. Stream of bikes.

Clarke: Yeah.

Ruggerio: So it's a great organization, they called that -- the ride to the Wall -- they called that a demonstration. Just keeping alive the POW issue is the primary function.

To me, it's been a lot of fun...I love to go after these funds that are available and see [them] put to good use. We replaced a washer and a dryer in the spinal injury ward at Hines Hospital a couple years ago. We furnished a room in the spinal injury ward, bought computers for the blind center -- large print computers -- we bought computers for the internal ward, I call it, we bought them new computers, we put huge configuration of recumbent bathing systems in the LaSalle Veterans' Home, \$25,000 apiece.

Clarke: Yeah.

Ruggerio: But it saves two guys lifting a person.

Clarke: Right, yeah.

Ruggerio: Yeah, just put them on that gurney, and the gurney takes them up and down out of the tub. We put beds with lifts at the Manteno Veterans' Home...mobile lifts ...we put...dining room heat tables for food, to lay out, and we put those in the LaSalle Veteran's Home, too. We spend a lot of money on our local vets...Like I said, anybody [i.e., veteran], in need, too. So that's kinda Rolling Thunder in a nutshell...

Clarke: And so chapters are doing it across the country, pretty much? Or is yours particularly active?

Ruggerio: I think we do a lot more, we've been recognized more...

Clarke: This is why you're getting chosen to do the gold star stuff?

Ruggerio: Yes, we've been recognized more even in our national...they have the national conference every November, the last couple years we've been recognized as one of the frontrunners of the chapters [in the country].

Clarke: That's good.

Ruggerio: So we feel pretty good about that.

Clarke: That's very cool, yeah.

Ruggerio: And our guys work hard, like I say, we're all volunteers.

Clarke: Yeah.

Ruggerio: That's kind of Rolling Thunder in a nutshell. And...good organization. I'll ride until I can ride no more.

Clarke: Yeah!

Ruggerio: I met a new idol last year, he's a guy -- 85 -- who showed up for our show.

Clarke: He was on his Harley.

Ruggerio: He was on his Harley, yep. So...

Clarke: Oh, that's pretty cool.

Ruggerio: So I said the downside...the downside to aging and riding a motorcycle -- as long as you've got your health, that's good -- but when they design the course...the test course, they designed it back in the 70s when bikes were small, so when you reach the age of 75 in the state of Illinois and you have to renew your license, you'll have to take the driver's test for both the bike, and your car. Okay?

Clarke: Yeah.

Ruggerio: So I went to take the car test, passed it no problem. The guy says, "Oh, by the way, you have to renew your license for your bike, too." I said, "Okay," I went home and got my bike...well, the bike is a little bit larger than it was when they designed the course. So if you drop a foot or you hit a cone, you're disqualified. So I tried it twice, and I was disqualified twice. So I said, "Oh my God," I went back to school.

Clarke: You went back to...?

Ruggerio: I went back and took the course. And five days of hard writing... [Laughs].

Clarke: And you got it.

Ruggerio: I got it. I got it. I got my license, I said, "Well, the next one comes up when I'm 79." I said, "If I'm physically okay..."

Clarke: Go back to school!

Ruggerio: "I'll go back to school!" Yeah! That's the easiest way to assure it, because they haven't redesigned the course. You know, in the old days, you had a little bike, you could go in and out, weave it, but you can't hit it.

Clarke: You got these big giant...maybe you could just bring a little bike. [Laughs].

Ruggerio: Yeah, well...I could rent one.

Clarke: Go rent a little bike.

Ruggerio: Rent a little bike, I could do that.

Clarke: Show up on a moped.

Ruggerio: [Laughs]. That's right!

Clarke: "I passed the course!" "No, no, you gotta go get a motorcycle."

Ruggerio: Well even this last time in the course, there were 12 of us, only nine of us finished the course, only six of us passed.

Clarke: Wow.

Ruggerio: Yes, it was tough. I said as I age...as I mature, I don't say, "As I get older..." [Both laugh]. As I mature it becomes a little more difficult. [Laughs].

Clarke: Oh man, that's really weird, that they would not redesign the course for the larger bike.

Ruggerio: You have any other specific questions that you wanna throw?

Clarke: Well, I think that between our first three hours and our second two hours we've got a really good oral history here. I mean, we've gone through...I've done a good job of asking you about your mentors, because you've been...I've had you kind of list them off through the...through time, of the people who influenced you.

Ruggerio: I can give you some people that I influenced...the names of people.

Clarke: I think we did a little bit of that. Didn't we?

Ruggerio: Well, I don't know if we touched on names. Other than Pat Hickerson, but...

Clarke: Well, why don't we do that and then I'm gonna ask you a wrap-up question.

Ruggerio: Okay.

Clarke: And then we'll be done. How's that?

Ruggerio: Okay. I would think that several people that worked for me...the first one that comes to mind is a retired four-star general, B.B. Bell. B.B. Bell was -- when I was a battalion commander in Korea -- he was a captain, and he was my operations guy...he was my S-3. And the general would call down and say, "You need to get a major in that job." ...I'd call back to the general and say, "No general, I don't need a major, this guy's doing a great job, he's gonna be a general someday."

Clarke: You told me this story. Yeah, you told me about B.B. Bell.

Ruggerio: Yeah, B.B. Bell.

Clarke: I think we did a little bit of that in the first three hours.

Ruggerio: Okay. And then...one of the three-stars that got himself selected as a scapegoat, I think, in the first [Iraq] war, was a guy named Rich Sanchez. He ended up bitin' the bullet because somebody else [did not take] the heat for it and [Rick] ended up [the scapegoat]... [Coughs] there was another four-star general by the name of Tom Hill -- James T. Hill -- he worked for me when I was a squadron S-3. He was my horse platoon leader in the horse cavalry platoon at Fort Hood, Texas. He took that horse platoon all over the country, it was a big recruiting tool we had. Those guys were donned in uniforms of yesteryear, the horse's paraphernalia was all yesteryear, made by the prisoners in Huntsville, Texas. They made all of that paraphernalia for the horses and the uniform design and everything. The prisoners did that. [Tom] led that platoon, all over the country. It was a big recruiting effort during the modern volunteer Army era, '73, '74, '75, and Tom Hill was the captain, and he subsequently became a four-star. And then another [great] guy I worked with and I talked into branch transferring at...he was a signal corps officer and subsequently became an infantry officer, [John W.] Hendrix. General Hendrix was a four-star. [Laughs]. Then...and then [Rick] Lynch made two. So there were a number of those folks that worked for me and with me and I always tap them on the shoulder and say, "I trained you pretty well."

Clarke: [Laughs].

Ruggerio: They were really, really good young officers, and you can tell...you can pretty much tell who's gonna go and who's not gonna go.

Clarke: Why is that?

Ruggerio: Just...their interests, their enthusiasm, their poise, demeanor. You know? You can...some of these guys have a...have an innate ability to display it. I always say, "That's the Colin Powell look." Colin Powell always looked like a general. Gordon Sullivan, when he became an officer, you would've said, "Yes...he's goin'." But as a student, you would've said, "He's not going." You know? [Laughs].

Clarke: He was telling me this story the other day...

Ruggerio: Was he?

Clarke: His grandson or his nephew or something went to Norwich and they were telling the story about how he's a horrible student, and he thought...

Ruggerio: Academically, he was a great student.

Clarke: Or something happened, yeah.

Ruggerio: Academically, he was a gold star. He was a good student. And...but he...but he was one of those guys. I remember...

[2:19:05] CUT [2:19:46]

It's funny, because I can look back to my Norwich days and the guys everybody thought were gonna be the chiefs were the guys that didn't. And so, you never really know who's gonna shine at the eleventh hour. And...so...

Clarke: Yes, but in a training situation like you were in, you could kind of...

Ruggerio: You can pick 'em.

Clarke: In that...little more formal setting...

Ruggerio: And I say...B.B. Bell was one of them. And the other one -- didn't work for me directly, worked for his dad -- was Dave Grange. You know...okay?

Clarke: General Grange.

Ruggerio: Yeah.

Clarke: He was over at McCormick, right?

Ruggerio: Right, he was at McCormick.

Clarke: When he was at McCormick, McCormick made sure to support this place. When he left McCormick, they stopped supporting this place.

Ruggerio: Is that right?

Clarke: Yeah, it is.

Ruggerio: Even with Paul out there?

Clarke: Yeah. It was him. It was Grange. He got it. He understood what a place like this means.

Ruggerio: Yeah.

Clarke: So it's really something that...if you get it, you get it.

Ruggerio: Yeah. Well, I know Henderson. I'll have to work on him.

Clarke: Yeah, well...if we can figure it out, we'll figure it out.

Ruggerio: But anyway, he...these youngsters were just great guys...I mean, you could pick 'em and say, "He's gonna go, he's not gonna go," you know...and I knew Bell was gonna go as a captain, that's why...Bob Kingston was my boss, and the reason I could yell at Bob Kingston was 'cause he was Vessey's chief of staff when I was Vessey's exec. So...

Clarke: You did tell that story, I remember that story. That was a good one.

Ruggerio: B.B. Bell, you know, as a young lieutenant colonel was Schwarzkopf's exec in Desert Storm. Yeah. So...I always tell someone, you gotta jump on somebody's coattail and ride with 'em.

Clarke: Yeah, that's important.

Ruggerio: It's very important.

Clarke: Little different in the civilian world, but it's...

Ruggerio: Oh yeah.

Clarke: You can do it in the military world. So, you're kind of already doing that, but thinking back on your long career in the military, was there any one thing you look back on and say, or...this is gonna be a tough question. Is there any one thing that you look back on and go, you know, that was a defining moment for me. That really...that really...that experience kinda made me who I am, or how it helped define who I was as an officer, who I was as a person, who I was as somebody's boss, and/or who I was when I was under somebody.

Ruggerio: Yeah, it's a simple question for me.

Clarke: It is?

Ruggerio: Yeah. First of all...I'm gonna give you a two part answer. First part, who I was as a kid from Connecticut who grew up and went to military school from the time I was fifteen years old....My dad had taken me to a parade at West Point when I was five, and I knew at that particular point that I wanted to be a soldier. Okay? Now what kind of a soldier was I going to be? I always said I'm gonna be a

combat soldier. Until I got to Norwich, I didn't know I was going to go armor at that particular point. But I got so enthused about tanks and the history of General Harmon and then the armored divisions and Patton and...so you get enthused about that stuff, you know. And then, as I entered the Army as a lieutenant, and subsequently was married and started to have a family and...you know, so you become a little more serious. As a bachelor you worked hard, you played hard. As a family guy, you're looking at a different thing. You have to support your family, you have to take care of your children, you have to take care of your wife, and I thought I did that to the best of my abilities at the time. And so...my children tease me today, they all...none of them did the military because they said they all did their time with me.

Clarke: [Laughs].

Ruggerio: So from my perspective, I had some good jobs up through the grade of...you know, major, and lieutenant colonel, the early days of lieutenant colonel. But when I was selected to be General Vessey's exec. That put me in a different ball game. I say General Vessey made me global. I was thinking in a global perspective once I became his...[executive officer], I had to make sure he was at the right place at the right time, he had the right uniform, he had the right documents...we'd come back for the Senate Armed Services Committee hearings, I had to have all the books, I had to have all the documents he was gonna be briefed on and questioned on, just like you have a list of questions you're throwing at me, I had a list of questions that I thought they were gonna throw at him. I got all the staff together, I coordinated all the staff input, put it all in notebooks. I thought at a global level, I attended all the global briefings we received, I had all the briefings we had on the North Korea, and what they were doing, what they were thinking. He was the guy who educated me and brought me up to snuff in terms of my global perspective...you know, up until that point I was looking at...tunnel vision. I was a tankerman, a cavalryman, I do my job, lead my troops to the best of my ability, but I wasn't focusing on the world, as such. When I got to Korea, for example, I had a different perspective...graduate school helped me a little bit because my focus was Korea, in graduate school. So...and when I got to work for Vessey; that was it. That's why... I said that question was simple for me to answer, because that was the breaking point, for me. From that point forward...I got involved in a more global perspective as a regimental commander...As a G-3 -- I went to Europe, I did this in Europe, I did the Reforgers, we did global things, we worked with the Germans, you know, we worked with the Dutch...so, yeah. I worked with the...in Korea, I worked with the

ROK forces. I initiated an exchange program with a tank battalion...a Korean tank battalion. We'd send our soldiers to live with them and train with them, and they'd send theirs to train with us. Plus, I had KATUSA soldiers assigned to my battalion, so...it was just a...yeah, a global perspective. And I'm...my focus basically was Asia. I don't know if that answers your...

Clarke: It does. It does.

Ruggerio: It was easy because of Vessey.

Clarke: That's not always an easy question for people.

Ruggerio: No, I bet not.

Clarke: You know, 'cause they gotta really think back on a lot of different moments that might've changed them or shaped them, you know. 'Cause we all have little moments and big moments.

Ruggerio: But that was the big change. I mean, you're right, you always have little moments and big moments that change your perspective...my big one was...became more globally thinking. Focused.

Clarke: Dom, you've got quite the story. I tell ya, this is gonna be a good story.