

This interview was conducted on the 27th of July, 2000 and I am speaking with Mr. Bill Windrum.

Let's start out with you career. What led you to go into the Army?

Mr. Windrum: I was living in Canada and I had been in a first year pre-dental and I could see the war was winding down in Europe and I wasn't sure about Canada's commitment to fighting in the Pacific. I didn't want to stay in school any longer. I crossed the line into the United States and said, "Will you take me as a soldier?" The reply was, "If you are not German, Japanese, or Italian we would be glad to have you."

So you were Canadian?

Mr. Windrum: Yes, I became American. I was naturalized through my Army service. I didn't have to have that five years. They waived that. My understanding is that my naturalization papers are no longer valid because I went back to the country of my birth and stayed for longer than two years; or if you vote in a foreign country or serve in a foreign Army as a naturalized citizen you lose your citizenship. So the probability is that I am no longer considered an American citizen. I am just strictly Canadian. I don't look upon it that way, in my heart I will always be an American.

What is your home now?

Mr. Windrum: Vancouver, British Columbia.

So you do live in Canada?

Mr. Windrum: Yes.

How did you obtain your commission? You said you were commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Infantry.

Mr. Windrum: Yes, that was one of my goals; not to be a private forever. After basic at Fort Lewis, Washington, I was sent to Sam Houston because of my medical background. I didn't like the medics. If you weren't a doctor you were a nobody. I did want to be an officer so I applied for Infantry Officer Candidate School. On my third time I got it. I was sent off, I guess it was about August of 1946. I entered into what they called ninety day wonder; but it was really more like one hundred and twenty to one hundred and sixty. So in December of 1946 I became a second lieutenant. By the 2nd of January I was on a ship heading for Japan.

You said initially that you were assigned to the 25th Infantry Division?

Mr. Windrum: That is right. The 25th was down in the south based in Osaka (?) and I was just out of Osaka with the Wolf Hounds Regiment at a place called Sugimotochoi (?) a former naval colony similar I guess to West Point but Naval.

You were there straight-leg Infantry?

Mr. Windrum: Yes that is right. I was the second lieutenant in a platoon in a heavy weapons company, H Company.

What was there mission at that point in time?

Mr. Windrum: H Company was kind of unique. The whole occupational Army was desperately under-strength. They were worried about the Russians and whether they might come down from the north. Somebody in higher headquarters set up this provision that some companies would be brought up to full strength and then they would train and be capable of immediate action you might say. H Company was one of the two heavy weapons companies that was selected for this. It was kind of a difficult situation because when the call went out to all the other regimental units to send two men, three men, four men or whatever, they picked out all their never do wells and sent them to us. So we had a whole company of screw-ups you might say. But they were all good men. We trained and we were quite capable if something had happened. After a while they decided to pull us back out of separation because we had been off by ourselves at a place called Wakayama(?). They brought us back to the naval colonies and we just became part of the regular battalion regiment structure.

So your duties then in the 25th really didn't have anything to do with the Japanese other than defense of the island in case the Russians decided...

Mr. Windrum: That was about it, yes. One thing we did do that was interesting was when the first pre-election in Japan, the first Democratic election, took place in April of that year. We were tasked to send out teams to all of the polling places on Election Day and all of the counting places on the next day and we were insured that all of the rules as established by GHQ were observed. This was the first election that Japanese women were ever allowed to vote. So I was one of those teams. In fact I was one of the Liaison Officers that set up the teams so I picked the one furthest from regiment for myself because I knew that I couldn't come back between elections. I in fact had a five week holiday at government expense working only on Fridays and Saturdays.

You were overseeing the elections. So the US forces guarded the polling places?

Mr. Windrum: No, we just circulated and asked questions of the people about if they were pressured to vote and made sure that there were no signs within a certain distance of the polling places. A lot of people there had never met an occidental before. This was their first exposure to people other than Japanese. They were kind of shy at first. The little kids were kind of forward and they would wave at us as we would go by in jeeps. They had three words: hello, goodbye and okay. They were stoked about it. We used to save the candies out of our D rations and we would give them to the kids or the cereal because it had sugar in the little package. They loved it. After a while the mothers began

to wave to us. Near the end of the time, even the men were bowing and waving as we passed by. We knew we had been accepted.

I want to start first with the psychological aspects. How did the U.S. Army, what was your perception in your soldiers in your command, how did they look at the Japanese?

Mr. Windrum: MacArthur had established some pretty definite rules of behavior as to what you were to do and not do. The Japanese were also maybe told what they were to do and not do. I was impressed at how peaceable the situation was because I knew that in Germany people were stringing wires across roads to decapitate people in jeeps speeding by. We never ran in to any problem in Japan. I did hear of a couple of personal incidents where members of the Japanese in rings who looked upon themselves as being the cream. They were a little arrogant sometimes to members of the occupation, but were more or less put in their place and never caused a problem afterward. Everywhere that I went people were very hospitable. They went out of their way to find somebody who could speak English so that they could communicate with you. I never felt unsafe, even out in the boondocks, even all by myself.

Were you armed all the time?

Mr. Windrum: No, actually not ever, except if you were on maneuvers or something like that; or if you made a jump and were on an equipment jump then I would have a carbine and a pistol.

Not routinely you didn't carry a sidearm?

Mr. Windrum: No, I don't think it was allowed.

You never felt like you needed one. How did the soldiers treat the Japanese? I know the rules were in place and that MacArthur had very strict rules of conduct. Were they followed? Did there seem to be a lot of resentment?

Mr. Windrum: I don't think so, no. Possibly what had happened was the soldiers who had witnessed a lot of the fighting and the atrocities had so many points that they went home. By the time I got there in January of 1947, most of the people were like me. They had never been exposed to the fighting. So we didn't have that kind of built in worry about.

There wasn't any great animosity already. Now how did you come to transfer to the 11th Airborne?

Mr. Windrum: I did so because of the challenge and I wanted to be one of the top guys. I was always impressed at Benning when I went to OCS with the jump school with the caliber of men that were in the Airborne. I thought to myself that if I am going to be in the Army I want to be in the best outfit and the 11th Airborne in my estimation was the best outfit in Japan. So that is why I requested a transfer.

You said you had several request before.

Mr. Windrum: Well what happened was I requested it, but because Second Lieutenants were in such short supply my unit didn't want to lose me so they recommended disapproval. The next higher headquarters recommended disapproval, the next higher headquarters recommended disapproval and the final headquarters said approved. I guess they knew the 11th Airborne was even shorter of Second Lieutenants. They just said approved, and that a replacement officer would be supplied when possible. In two days I had my bags packed and I was on a train to Hatsinoi (?)

Was your first stop jump school?

Mr. Windrum: Not quite. I got in there I think it was either late July or early August, but the next opening at jump school was not until late September. I was effectively working on the post. I think my first job was assisting Provost Marshall. I had been assigned to Headquarter & Headquarters Company. I went to jump school late in September, got my wings by the 8th of October, but the course was only ten days or slightly longer; One week of pre-jump training and then five jumps two a day until you got your five. Depending on the weather you could have your five jumps in two and a half days which is what happened to me. I made my fifth jump on Wednesday morning and by Wednesday afternoon I had my wings.

No night jump?

Mr. Windrum: Not for basic jump training. You take night jumps when you do Pathfinder or Jumpmaster and then you have to do equipment jumps and night jumps.

Not anymore. Number five is a night jump now.

Mr. Windrum: We were landing in a tiny DZ. Our DZ was in between three runways. You could only jump five men at a time and even then if you were off a little bit you could be down on a runway. Our jumpmasters are pretty darn good. I don't think that anybody that I know has ever landed on a runway.

Are you still jumping out of C-47's?

Mr. Windrum: C-46's all the time. For jump training we just use the left door but on equipment jumps we use both doors.

You felt qualified when you finished your basic jump? Did you feel like you had the right training?

Mr. Windrum: Yes I did. I appreciated that ten day course instead of whatever it was at Benning which I did for several weeks. We had a very low accident rate. In the same throughout the division it was fairly low. We killed more people on the highway in the

first six months after we came back from Japan between Clarksville and Fort Campbell than ever were killed jumping in Japan.

That is our highest peace time losses today; automobile accidents are where you lose your soldiers. So after you finished jump school what did you do?

Mr. Windrum: I went back to Hatsinoi(?) and I think back to the same job. I don't recall having another job other than Assistant Provost Marshall. One of my duties was being in charge of the stockade. As I say, I went on leave and when I came back from leave somebody had posted me for transfer to the jump school and I had two days to pack my days and get there. I didn't see Hatsinoi (?) again for a year and a half when I came back to make the trip home to the United States with the last third of the division.

Now when you transferred to jump school you were cadre there until you left for ____.

Mr. Windrum: Yes, that's right. I wasn't in the jump training scheme of things. At the time I got there the Colonel, Colonel Roy Brooks, had obtained permission to set up a commissary because all of the people who lived at that post had to drive one hour to get any of the basic essentials of living. We had quite a permanent component there. Half of the base was Air Force and half was Airborne. I would say maybe half of them were married and had dependents. The Colonel had a building and it was just nothing except shelving at the moment. He said, "I want you to go to Tokyo and learn how to run a commissary by going to Tokyo QM Depot and come back. In the meantime, the px officer will order your initial supplies." So that is the way it worked. I went down and spent about ten days with a Captain in the QM Depot. I came back and the commissary was almost ready for opening, stuff was arriving, we set it up and opened our doors. It was opened up for about a half a day. The other half of the day, we would replenish everything, restock and reorder. I just kept a constant flow of the essentials, particularly the perishables because you are always concerned about a long shore man strike in San Francisco of what it would do to the flow of stuff. I remember one time the commissary at Sindai (?) didn't have any stakes or beef for about ten days. I always kept enough of a cushion that we never ran into any problems.

That must have been quite good for morale, particularly for the dependents.

Mr. Windrum: It was because they could just get out and walk to the commissary. It was the last building right by the gate as you go out. I would see all the guys in training running by singing the Airborne songs or called upon to shout out, "Yea Airborne or Are you going to jump!" It was a great morale component to the training.

I'm curious if you live in submission, the need for an airborne school in Japan. Why wouldn't they just train the soldiers in the states before your replacements came over? They already had the jump school at Fort Benning.

Mr. Windrum: I guess it was the logistics of it because people would come over and then transfer. They would come over to the Fort Repo (?) Depot and then be reassigned and

they were non-jumping. I guess to some degree the division wanted to have control over that. We not only trained people as parachutists, we trained people as gliders too. General Swing wanted everybody in the division to be trained in both fields so we had a fleet of about thirty TG4A's and they were towed behind these C-46's at least two gliders behind every C-46. I don't remember but I think I have a photograph with maybe three of them behind the C-46. You are required to load and latch and understand the features of the proper loading so that they were not unstable. You had to make a certain number of glider rides and then you got your glider wings. But you could not wear both at that time.

General Swing wanted the entire division cross-trained?

Mr. Windrum: I think so. I think almost everybody was. At the same time we were in on the ground floor; you might say we were the cutting edge for air transportability too. They wanted everybody to be trained to be transportable by air even if you weren't an airborne soldier. So when we ran our transportability school, I know that we had a number of people from 9th Corp and we had a number from 1st Cav. They would come up and go through a ten day course that would teach them how to balance a load and tie it down so it couldn't move inside a C-46. Then they would take trips with the C-46. There were no wings or anything but you got a certificate saying that you had passed the air transportability course. We were experimenting with the dropping of the heavy loads like jeeps and stuff. I remember one famous one where the parachutes failed to open. There was a cluster of three forty-eight foot canopies and none of them opened. The jeep just came screaming down.

So that was quite a bit of experimentation. I didn't realize the extent of the training that was offered.

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Mr. Windrum: We even had Marine officers come in and take it. We put at least two Marine officers through the course. I have a picture of one of them in my room hoisting a drink celebrating his brand new wings. He was a Captain at the time and he ultimately retired as a Major General.

Do you know at the time if the Marines were still running their airborne school at Lake Hurst?

Mr. Windrum: No, I really don't know.

They did during World War II have an airborne school at Lake Hurst, New Jersey. But I don't know if they were still operating after the war.

Mr. Windrum: I guess the bulk of their people had training. As far as I know we have only had two. I do have a one page sheet at home, a mimeograph put out by the commanding officer at the time that we all came home. It outlined how many people had been trained and how many people had taken this course. We had a Pathfinder course, we had a Jumpmaster course and he had all of that detailed on this sheet of paper. I'll make a photocopy of it and send it to you so that you can have some concrete statistics.

When you were at the Deputy Provost Marshall what type of problems did you encounter the law enforcement there at Japan? Was it mostly GI's drunk and disorderly, barracks fights and things?

Mr. Windrum: I guess that was basically it; somebody breaking the rules. A court martial would consign them to the stockade. The stockade was just a room on the back of the MP Headquarters. I sort of recall that they weren't double bunks, they were just single and there probably weren't more than about twenty bunks in the whole room. One of the funniest events that happened there was this Spanish-American boy that went berserk one night in the place. I had to investigate this. I talked to him about it. He pulled his mattress back and there were sheets of newspaper and marijuana leaves lying along the sheets of newspaper. I said, "For crying out loud, where did you get this stuff?" He said, "Lieutenant, its growing wild all around here. Every time I go on a road march I just reach down and grab a handful and then I dry it out." I guess nobody else recognized it. He said even the _____ that the Japanese have on the floor of their home had marijuana mixed in with it.

I know the Koreans grow it extensively to make rope. There is marijuana patches all over the Peninsula in Korea.

Mr. Windrum: He got hyped up on this marijuana. I asked him, "Why did you smoke this stuff?" He got this funny look on his face and his eyes just kind of went funny and he said, "It makes you feel bigger than life." I could understand why he was smoking it. We cut off his supply. We searched him when he came back from his road marches.

I was going to ask if he dried out from smoking marijuana in the stockade.

Mr. Windrum: One of the other funny things that happened there is that as Assistant Provost Marshall I was called in to these meetings with the Provost Marshall too when we were dealing with the Japanese. The Japanese had come with a complaint. They had apparently made a deal with the Occupational Forces that they were entitled to clean out all of the privies and they were going to use this product to fertilize their field. They were mad as the devil because there was toilet paper in it. The Japanese were using rice paper which would disintegrate but the cellulose paper that we were using was an impurity as far as they were concerned. They were really peeved that this stuff was in there. I think he resolved the problem by saying, "I'm sorry but there is nothing we can do about it."

I'm sure you were involved in the redeployment of the division when they left Japan and came back to Fort Campbell.

Mr. Windrum: Just as a participant, I didn't have anything to do with the planning of it. I think with the first ship load they were given quite a bit of time in Hawaii and Panama. Of course having been on a ship for a couple of weeks or so, they headed for the bars; headed for the girls. A lot of them got drunk and sort of tore up the neighborhood. So when the next bunch came through they were only given half as much time but they still

managed to do a little damage to Hawaii. By the time my ship came I think we had about six hours in Hawaii and three hours in Panama. Even then they were able to carry a couple of guys up the gangplank as we left Panama.

It's hard to deny the common drunk; especially the GI's that have been away from the sauce for a while. What were your rules of conduct in the Army of Occupation as far as consumption of alcohol, fraternization with the Japanese women, and conduct off post?

Mr. Windrum: Well as far as the 11th Airborne Division any fraternization with the Japanese women was clandestine. MacArthur had okayed fraternization, but Swing wouldn't and it would be particularly bad for an officer. In fact I think you could almost say you would get a discharge without honor if you got picked up with a Japanese girl. I remember when jump school for some reason or another had a higher VD rate than the 11th Airborne as a whole. The order came down of closing off this fraternization. I remember Captain Stanley was the company commander of the company that made up the cadre. He was really peeved. He said, "God, these young men; you either got to fuck or fight and who wants a whole company of fighters."

That's a good point. So the fraternization with the Japanese women in the 11th Airborne was forbidden?

Mr. Windrum: Yes. It was pretty clandestine.

So you had a Japanese girlfriend at your own risk?

Mr. Windrum: That's right and you would have to do it....

I'm sure a lot of guys did. Did the military police actively patrol for it? Did they have courtesy patrols walking through town?

Mr. Windrum: There were occasions I remember when a bunch of us at the jump school had arranged to rent a home on an island that was just connected by a tiny bridge to the shoreline at Matsushima (?) which was just about halfway to Sindai (?). I think the word Matsushima(?) means thousand islands or something like that. You could stand on the end of our island and you could throw a rock at the house on the shore and break a window on the 9th Corp general's home. We were that close to authority. One time the general came over with his aid and I guess the aid's wife or his wife and they walked toward us. We all jumped up and we were all in khaki pants and a white t-shirt and we all had our name on our shirt but not our rank. I remember Captain Stanley whispered to me, "Call me Private Stanley!" The general stopped and we all saluted. He said some phrase to us then turned and walked off. The _____ that we rented the home from was the widow of the former political boss in the town so she had a lot of local power. Apparently the military police decided that they were going to raid our little house which had American food, phonograph records and stuff. So the police came to her and said, "So sorry please there is going to be a raid." So she told them to clean everything out. So they brought a jeep and a trailer over and loaded everything up of American origin into the jeep, drove it

back, parked it behind the police station, the mp's drive up to the front, the police hop into the mp's jeep and they come back to raid the island and there is nothing. After the mp's leave they follow us up and put it back on the shelves. You might say the Japanese were very cooperative.

How about black marketing? Were there a lot of black marketing operations?

Mr. Win drum: I think there was, like non-smokers would sell their cigarettes. There was one investigation that took place; somebody was stealing coffee. It was GI coffee in the big cans. It wasn't the coffee in the little packages that we sold in the commissary. But one day my interpreter didn't turn up and he didn't turn up the next either. Finally the third day, he turned up. What had happened was because this coffee was turning up on the Japanese market they thought it might have come from the commissary. So they arrested him and kept him for interrogation. He said, "I kept telling them Lieutenant Windrum was a very honorable man; Lieutenant Windrum wouldn't be stealing and selling coffee." Ultimately they did find the culprit. It was somebody in the QM down in Sindai (?) and it was GI coffee in the big cans. Other than that there wasn't really a lot black marketing. Cigarettes were the big thing. The Japanese were desperate for them.

What about food? By the time you were in the occupation, was the economy stable enough that there was enough for the Japanese to eat. Right at the end of the war and the beginning of the occupation there was a shortage.

Mr. Windrum: I was told that even though the Japanese looked healthy and they had plump cheeks; particularly for some of the young women that there were hidden hungers. They were short of vitamins and minerals. There was enough food for everybody but they had just gone so long...

Fish, rice and vegetables; but very little fish.

Mr. Windrum: That's right. The work men used to carry these little aluminum cans tied in their handkerchief and tied to their belt. They would stop work, open their tin cans and go to work with their chopsticks and it was basically rice with little tiny bits of dark colored stuff which might have been fish or seaweed. The women were out there along the beaches kicking seaweed at low tide mainly precisely what they work for.

How was the Japanese food?

Mr. Windrum: I wasn't too fond of it. The skiaki (?) was sort of different. It was palatable because it was heated; they used to cook it right at the table in front of you. But the meat that they put in it wasn't beef, it was whale. Some of the whale was pretty funny tasting; fishy tasting almost even though it was a mammal. I don't recommend it.

When the division returned to Fort Campbell how smooth was the transition?

Mr. Windrum: Everything went very well. We were the third group home. If there were any problems that happened during the first group and the second group, by the time we got there everything was ironed out. We hit the dock at New Orleans and we were given fifteen days leave and told to report back to Fort Campbell at the end of it and it was just a matter of moving in. In my case I was assigned a room in the BOQ. I think at that time was when I was transferred to the medical company even though it wasn't anything to do with medicine. It was as an administrative officer running the company. Some of the specialists in the company were medical personnel. All of the officers were all infantry officers.

Were you still Lieutenant or were you a Captain at the time.

Mr. Windrum: I was a Lieutenant. I got out as a first lieutenant. I got promoted to first lieutenant when I was at the jump school. I guess it was about a year and a half after I had made second lieutenant and I was still just a first lieutenant when I got out. I thought about a career in the forces but I decided that the Army was downsizing and a lot of officers were either being terminated or certainly allowed to leave if they wished. My guess was that not being a West Pointer I would never become a one star general. I figured that if I couldn't be a general, I didn't want to play. I used the GI Bill and got a doctorate degree in Dentistry.

You retired as a Dentist?

Mr. Windrum: I retired. I was in private practice for about thirteen years. Then I was in public health dentistry for about seventeen years until I got tired of doing the same thing with my fingers. I decided I wanted to work with my brain instead of my hands. There was some of each in the public health so I retired from that after seventeen years.

Are there any other reflections you would like to share with me before we turn the tape off?

Mr. Windrum: No I think we covered just about everything that I can think of.

I would like to thank you very much for your time. We have a university and the future Wings of Liberty Museum that would like to thank you for your time and your contribution to our archives.