END-OF-TOUR ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

BRIGADIER GENERAL (P) PATRICIA P. HICKERSON

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Fort Jackson, South Carolina

31 January - 24 September 1996

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LEADER BIOGRAPHY

DR. BOWER: What were the circumstances under which you joined the Army, and when did you decide to make it a career?_

BG HICKERSON: I played in my high school band and decided to follow that with a music major in college. I attended an all-girls college in South Carolina and majored in flute performance, working towards a bachelor's in Music with plans to get a master's degree in Music. Joining the Army was the last thing I thought I would do with my life. Life, though, takes strange and unexpected turns. I found myself in Raleigh, North Carolina, as a junior high band director -- something else I had not really planned to do, but we had to eat. So I taught school while my former husband, a Virginia Military Institute graduate with Reserve commission commitment, attended graduate school. When he decided to go back on active duty after graduate school, I was still trying to determine my occupation. He learned about the direct commission program for women who had earned a bachelor or master's degree. There was little Officer Candidate or Reserve Officer Training for women, or any other source of commissioning for that matter. After going through an evaluation and board process, women officers received direct commissions through the United States Army Recruiting Command.

The first time he recommended it to me I thought he was nuts, but, after thinking about my options, it became more attractive. I was trying to get into another line of civilian work anyway. I had not planned to teach school. My major in conservatory music did not give me the academic credentials to maintain a state teaching certificate without additional schooling. I really did not want to have to do that, but switching from music and school teaching to something different would not have been easy. The Army became an attractive opportunity. I figured to go in for about five years, be with my husband, get some leadership and management skills, get out, and go find something in the civilian sector. Because of my graduate degree, I came in as a first lieutenant. That was in 1968 at the height of the Vietnam War. Back then, you became a captain after twelve months. So, after four-and-a-half months of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) Officer Basic Course, I had nearly enough time to

make captain. During that time, I quickly decided that I wanted to go Regular Army, which was very unusual for a junior officer, especially one in the Women's Army Corps. I was stationed in the Military District of Washington. Basically, all I had to do was apply -- "yes, I want to go regular Army." I got a special OER (Officer Evaluation Report) and was later commissioned in the Regular Army.

I made the decision quickly, and did so because of what I knew about the civilian sector. I saw women commanding in the WAC and holding the kind of jobs women simply didn't have elsewhere. The WAC, of course, was still segregated, most of the WAC commands were detachments, and most of the jobs were in recruiting, protocol, and public affairs, but it was still different from anything I had seen outside the Army. The opportunities for women were expanding. Prior to President Johnson's 1967 approval of a bill authorizing equal promotions for women, there were very few women colonels in the Army. In fact there was only one, the director of the WAC, who was appointed not selected . Previously, when she left the director's post, she'd turn her rank over to her successor. She had the option of either retiring or assuming the reduced rank of a lieutenant colonel. All that had changed when I came into the Army in August 1968. Women had just been selected for colonel by a promotion board for the first time. All of a sudden there were female colonels. Then, on 11 June 1970, I'll never forget the day, two women were promoted to Brigadier General -- Anna B. Hayes, Chief of the Army Nurse Corps and Elizabeth Hoisington, Director of the WAC. That was awesome to us. I saw those changes.

DR. BOWER: Was the direct commissioning process an attempt to enlist women with particular skills?

BG HICKERSON: It focused more on bringing women of a particular educational level into the Army. A bachelor's degree was required for a direct commission. Most of the women had either a bachelor's or master's degree. The average age of the women commissioned was 26; so you had women in their early 30s, many of them coming from impressive civilian occupations, and who had made the same decision as I had. They wanted to try something different, and saw the Army as an attractive opportunity. We had a lot of older women who were joining. Again, I didn't come in right out of college in 1964. When I joined in 1968, I had finished my graduate degree and had taught school for three years. There were some younger women who joined the WAC right out of college. The WAC had what we called the "College Junior Program" where we would recruit women during their junior year of college. We'd give them four weeks at the WAC center in the summer and pay them at the grade of E4 during their senior year. If they applied for commissioning upon graduation, they'd come in as a second lieutenant. That was another of the efforts to

attract women into the Army. In 1968, during the Vietnam War, we were trying to increase the number of women officers and expand the Women's Army Corps. For instance, some of the women in my class were among the first married women to be commissioned in the WAC. It was not allowed before.

DR. BOWER: How was it for you and other women in the Army during those days? Would you trade them for what women have today?

BG HICKERSON: The Army is better for women today than when I came in. I'm proud to have been a part of the progress. There's no substitute for the kind of opportunity that women in Army have these days. Because of that, I think we are really attracting some outstanding young women. They make for better officers, because they come better prepared. They know about the Army and they strive to be a part of it. Women go to West Point and complete ROTC in college. They're extremely talented, confident, and educated. They're better prepared to lead. They're accomplished athletes. They do very well in the Army. Beginning with year-group 1974, the first year after the expansion started, we started to recruit many impressive women. That year group is nearly eligible for brigadier general. You're going to start to see some impressive women from the various branches of the Army get promoted. The preponderance of women thus far have served as Military Police or with the Adjutant General branch, but soon you're going to see women promoted to high rank in some of the other branches.

DR. BOWER: As you look to the future, what milestones would you like to see women in the Army accomplish?

BG HICKERSON: There are still some positions closed to women, and I'm not speaking exclusively of ground combat, infantry or armor. Even within the AG Corps, there are positions closed to women because of the location of particular units. We'll continue to evaluate these positions. Those numbers continue to diminish, but it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for women of any service to go beyond the three-star rank. There are only two now, one in the Marine Corps and one in the Navy. It will be tough to go beyond that unless there are some changes in the jobs made available to women, particularly in the Army and Marine Corps. The Navy and the Air Force have few remaining gender restrictions on their positions. The Air Force has opened 99.5% of its jobs to women, the Navy 96%. The Army stands at about 67%. As long as you have a large number of positions in ground combat units, positions not open to women, there will be limitations on what women can achieve in the Army.

There's a four-star position in the logistics field. That's probably the only four-star position women can conceivably hope to attain. The rest are in the combat arms/ combat support branches. Women will continue to be top performers and will continue to open doors because of it. That's why many doors have opened in the first place. There have been a lot of really talented women who have performed well when given the opportunity. That's the way it should be. We'd rather manage that from within rather than have it imposed upon us. When that happens the women are resented and it just doesn't work as well. When everybody's involved, cooperating with the program, it become a natural progression to something better. It works, then. However, sometimes issues have to be forced, as with the service academies. Women were forced upon the academies, but that's been far from the disaster that some predicted. In fact, it's been a tremendous success. As much as we hate to admit it, sometimes others know best.

DR. BOWER: What about women in combat? I don't see that issue going away anytime soon.

BG HICKERSON: Let me talk a little about where I think we've been and where we are. Beginning with Grenada, "Operation Urgent Fury," people started to look at the women in combat issue a little differently. During that operation and again in Panama, female MPs, like it or not, were involved in combat situations. In Operations Desert Shield and Storm, we deployed a lot of women. Even the Marine Corps deployed many women. The things that women experienced and did in Southwest Asia have influenced current law and policy within the Department of Defense. Neither the Air Force nor the Navy has a combat exclusion policy anymore. In the Army, it's still policy. Women are excluded from ground combat and from many positions considered combat related. Desert Storm changed thinking on this issue. We had women killed and women taken prisoner during that operation. With encouragement from their commands, there were women in jobs during Desert Storm in violation of the Direct Combat Probability Code, and things worked very well. The units that kept women with them and went forward did very well. Those female soldiers performed as well, if not better, than their male counterparts.

Women have served in combat positions and have come to be generally accepted in those positions. The remaining issue has to do with ground combat, at least with the Infantry and Armor branches and perhaps some of the forward units. The difference between what women can do today, and what they were doing ten years ago is 180 degrees. No one would ever have believed it. Ideally, gender should never be a factor in this job -- a person who is qualified for the job should be allowed to perform it. There are certainly ways to determine qualification. If physical qualifications are required, you can test for that. We can devise fair and objective criteria to test physical requirements for a job. Beyond that, if someone is competent

and qualified, then they should have the opportunity to do the job. Do I see things suddenly opening up for women in Infantry and Armor? No. It may happen in my lifetime through some kind of evolutionary process or by someone forcing it politically. Do I think women can do it? Yes, I do. A lot of my contemporaries surprise me with the same point of view. Some combat arms generals agree with me, but there are others who remain adamantly opposed.

Women are doing a lot of things now that people never thought they could do or would be allowed to do by their male counterparts. Soldiers follow leaders whoever he or she may be. Competency is all they want -- caring and confident leaders. If it's a male, fine, and if it's a female, that's fine also. Physical strength is an important qualification for ground combat, but we can deal with that in a fair and objective way and not exclude women on the basis of gender. So, I don't know whether it will happen or not. If someone asked for my vote, I'd say, give women the chance to be all they can be.

On another level, lots of women deployed to Southwest Asia caused the services to address a myriad of new issues -- like the deployment of married military couples and single moms forced to leave behind small kids. Those are difficult issues, but, in my opinion, they have to be resolved in favor of the Army. People need to be aware of the implications of their choices when they join the Army. So, we should just get on with it. Southwest Asia caused some views to shift in the other direction. Overall, though, the issues have been progressive for women in the Army. We sometimes have had to take a couple steps back, but they've been followed by three steps forward. The gradual trend is forward and progressive.

DR. BOWER: Do you think the progress women have made in the Army in the last 20 years would have been possible without the conversion to the all-volunteer force?

Probably not. That's the sole reason the Department of Defense started recruiting women in large numbers. The pressure to field a volunteer force forced the services to open positions to women previously forbidden to them. Today we try to recruit the best candidates. Of course, there are still job restrictions. You aren't going to recruit a woman to be a 19 Delta (cavalry scout), but we don't have quotas for women like we used to have years ago. Today, of the recruiting total, 20% are women. Sometimes that goes a little higher. The Army's goal is about 18%, but I don't think that would be possible without the necessity to field a volunteer Army. However, we still have people who would like to go back to an all-male army.

DR. BOWER: Was there a point in your career when you sensed it became less of an issue for men to have women working for them in key positions?

BG Hedberg was the first female TAG. I came after her. It's easier when you're not the first, but I was the first woman in a lot of cases -- the first in the Readiness Group, the first in the Infantry Advanced Course, the first on the staff at West Point, the first VII Corps TOE battalion commander. Even as a lieutenant colonel on the joint staff, I found some male officers who had never worked with women before. It was no longer an issue for me when I became the TAG and was promoted to brigadier general. I felt the PERSCOM commander, MG Ord, really wanted me to be the TAG. He thought I was the right person. I had known him at points during my career. He was enthusiastic about my appointment and so helpful when I came into the job. In the beginning, I was only a colonel promotable because the promotion list had not yet been confirmed. He recognized the TAG had a lot going on at the time with Desert Shield and Storm. During ODS/S we reported to the operations center every morning at 0600 and worked every weekend. MG Ord made me feel I was the right person, in the right place, at the right time. When the time came, he pinned on my stars and promoted me. He's been a mentor and a friend ever since. That was probably the moment.

DR. BOWER: You mentioned that you entered the AG Corps a bit late in your career. Tell us about the circumstances surrounding your decision to affiliate with the AG Corps, and about the positions you've held in the branch.

Women commissioned in the WAC were basically branch immaterial. When the draft was disestablished in 1972, and we began recruiting the all-volunteer force, the whole concept of utilization of women officers changed. We knew we would be detailed or transferred to other branches, but we didn't know which branches. In January 1973, I was one of the first two women to enter the Infantry Officer Advanced Course (IOAC) at Fort Benning, Georgia. That's how we got in. They cancelled the WAC Advanced Course we were scheduled to attend. One woman went to field artillery and two of us went to infantry. The IOAC was a nine-month course. Initially the Army thought they'd branch us with the infantry and assign us to work in some of the manpower/force structure jobs in the infantry branch. Eventually the OPMS (Officer Personnel Management System) was implemented, and we did not go into infantry after graduation. All women officers had to choose a branch. Of course, I wanted to go infantry, but I suspected they wouldn't let me. Air Defense Artillery was opened to women very briefly in 1974; so, I called the Air Defense branch. They looked at my WAC file and said, "OK, we'll take you." However, before a firm decision had been made to let me in, it closed again. I became an AG by default, having first requested Infantry and Air Defense. I transferred to AG, but I had already been through an Advanced Course, and a five-week military personnel officer's course at Fort Benjamin Harrison, the only course I ever attended at Fort

Harrison. Despite the fact it was the home of the AG branch, I was never assigned there.

My first AG assignment was with the Readiness Group in Atlanta, working with the Reserve Components. I was a captain working as the Chief of the AG branch team. That was my first AG job. The experience helped me to understand and appreciate the Reserve Components. I was probably the first woman ever assigned to a Readiness Group, and I scared them to death. Since I had been to the Infantry Advanced Course, it seemed "OK" with them. They decided they could deal with it. Had I not been to Fort Benning and to the field to learn radio techniques and the phonetic alphabet, things I would not have learned as a WAC or AG, I probably would not have had a very successful tour, if not career. With the Readiness Group, I learned all about manual records. The Reserve Components had not yet adopted SIDPERS and automated records. It turned out to be a good place for me to start, because I got a basic orientation to personnel work.

I then took an assignment with the Military Academy for two years. I was supposed to go to VII Corps and work in personnel actions, but the Army assigned me to West Point as an assignment officer instead. The law had been changed to admit women, and I was there to receive the first women who attended the Military Academy. Since I held a specialty code 47 (education), I thought it enhanced my alternate career skills. After CGSC (Command General Staff College), I went to Korea to work in protocol, but that was changed and I ended up in the MILPERCEN (Military Personnel Center) as the Chief of the Officer Personnel Management Branch. I had been a major for a little over a year. MILPERCEN, Korea was a great assignment for me. Even better things happened during my second year in Korea. I went to the 2d Infantry Division as the Deputy G1. At the time, the division G1 and AG positions were still separate. The division AG had no positions for a major, but the G1 did. So, I took that job. My husband was the Deputy Provost Marshal. We had a great year in the 2d Infantry Division learning how to soldier.

I'm convinced Korea was the turning point in my career. West Point was great as was my company command time with the WAC band. But the combination of the Infantry Advanced Course and my work with the 2nd Infantry Division really was a turning point. I was the only woman in my Basic Officer Course to serve in a combat division. Those assignments were just not open to women. I was lucky to have been able to keep the job for as long as I did. They considered taking it away from me on several occasions. Personnel would change -- the division commander or the chief of staff -- and they'd voice their discomfort with the woman in the G1 shop. Fortunately, the G1 was an officer I had known from my time at West Point. He knew me personally, and, because of him, I was allowed to keep the job. Otherwise, who knows what would have happened. But that one year in the 2d ID was a tremendous experience.

After Korea, I went to MILPERCEN in Washington, D.C., for 18 months with the EPMD (Enlisted Personnel Management Division) in something called personnel procedures and assignments. We developed all the processes and procedures for the assignment of enlisted people. I had responsibility for several of the regulations; so, it gave me an opportunity to get to know all aspects of EPMD. From there I went to ASAMRA (Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs) as the military assistant in the personnel policy division. It was awesome being in the Pentagon and getting to work in jobs on both sides of the DCSPER (Deputy Chief of Staff of Personnel) -- the EPMD being subordinate and the the MRA as the driving force behind personnel policy. I learned a variety of things in two very rewarding jobs.

To my good fortune, I was selected for battalion command in Europe. It turned out to be an interesting situation. I had never been assigned to Europe, but MILPERCEN had designated me to command the VII Corps P&A Battalion (Personnel and Administration). However, the VII Corps did not want me. I would have been the first woman to have held the job. I was a bit disappointed. I had made major below the zone so I thought I was doing very well. I was very excited to have been selected for battalion command and a little disappointed to find out that Europe did not want me.

DR. BOWER: Was it because you were a woman?

BG HICKERSON: I can't say for sure, but that was probably the underlying reason. They had never before had a female commander. The reason they gave was that I had never been to Europe. So, PERSCOM (Personnel Command) and my assignment officer said, "Oh, we can take care of that. We'll send her early to get some experience." So, they sent me in January to the VII Corps where I served in personnel actions working for the Corps AG, the guy for whom the P&A Battalion commander worked. It gave me the opportunity to learn the lay of the land. By the time I assumed command, all the people who said they didn't want me had left for other assignments. I had a wonderful two years commanding the 38th P&A Battalion in Europe. From that experience, I realized the importance of that type of battalion. We still need that kind of structure in our inventory. The PSBs (Personnel Support Battalions) function similarly to the old P&A battalions in that we run the MILPOs (Military Personnel Offices). The 38th P&A Battalion, for instance, ran all the nondivisional MILPOs for VII Corps. The battalion was spread out in ten different locations.

At the time, we were trying to put the first computers in our MILPOs so we could do some automated processing. We drove all over Europe trying to develop a

workable system for our units. I realized at the time that AGs were not very strong in combat survival stuff or had had much experience learning field duties. I saw a lot of captains and E6s and 7s who were not very skilled in field duties. I certainly wasn't, and they weren't either. We weren't as sharp or as technically qualified as the young ones coming up now. The 1984-86 period was a transition time, a time when we were really getting some dynamite young soldiers and officers into the branch. The schoolhouse was changing also. Schoolhouse training was becoming more oriented towards the field environment and TOE (Table of Organization and Equipment) type skills. The changes have served our branch well. It was an exciting time.

My boss was the Corps AG; my senior rater was the Deputy Commanding General of the Corps (two star). The same rating chain was used in V Corps. Stateside units, on the other hand, worked for the COSCOM (Corps Support Command) or the SUPCOM (Support Command). We were very large and very spread out. In fact, I felt like my battalion was a mini-brigade. I had three PSCs (Personnel Service Companies) and ten MILPOs scattered about. So, command and control was a challenge -- the phones never seemed to work. Dan Snyder was the Corps AG. He was my boss the entire time with VII Corps. General Vollrath had just taken command of 1st PERSCOM at the time. He was a remarkable leader who set a wonderful example for the entire AG Corps in Europe. He had loads of credibility with the leadership of VII Corps, and I think all of USAREUR (U.S. Army Europe). He looked after his people and generated a tremendous amount of enthusiasm. He was a great asset to the AG Corps then, and he remains one to this day.

During battalion command, I was fortunate enough to be selected for the War College. So, I left Europe for the National War College, my first choice. MG Hall, commander of PERSCOM, knew I wanted to go there, so he saw to it. The National War College's curriculum is pretty much strategically oriented, and the staff didn't want too many people who weren't combat oriented. They thought I fell into this category, but they had a hard time understanding that the Army's personnel specialists go to war. They don't deploy in the Air Force, but they do in the Army. There had been a few AGs before me, and many since. I felt very fortunate to have been able to attend. I enjoyed the joint environment -- the travel, the guest speakers, and all the rest.

I think the War College led to a very exciting job for me. It wasn't an AG job, but one that remains a major mark in my career. I became an administrative assistant to Admiral Crowe, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Prior to my time, the position had been held by a GM-15 civilian. The military assistant to the Chairman wanted to convert it into a military position, because of his disatisfaction with the civilians who had been in the job. One was retiring, so he took the opportunity to convert the position. Originally, I was supposed to have gone to PERSCOM to take a colonel's job with the Management Support Division. Just a few days before I was

supposed to report, I was told I was going to the Chairman's office. The job was as exciting as it gets, working on a joint staff in an operational environment. Many of my War College classmates worked on the staff also. With the recent passage of Goldwater-Nichols, we came along at the time when joint service was becoming a focal point. We were one of the first classes assigned after the new legislation. But the job was wonderful and rewarding. It made a difference that I worked with folks from my own and other services with whom I had served previously. I have classmates in the various services that have achieved three-star status now. It was an exciting time with Admiral Crowe, a wonderful man. He worked hard to bring the Navy into the joint arena. Historically, they had resisted the idea. He brought the Navy into the fold. I served with some wonderful folks in that job, some of whom I'm still working with or for. Some have retired at the four-star rank.

After the Joint Chiefs, I was selected for brigade command and went off to another joint assignment with a MEPCOM (Military Entrance Processing Command). The Chairman's Office would have deferred me for a year had we been able to talk through it, because I really wanted to command the 8th PERSCOM in Korea. We had other AG colonels who had deferred command, and it was causing selection lists to back up. So, I took the command, feeling it was the right thing to do. I could have gotten a two-year waiver. Even though a MEPCOM was not my personal choice for command, I thought I should set the example and go. However, I was really glad afterwards. I enjoyed the command. I had Central Sector, 24 MEPs (Military Entrance Processing Stations) in the middle of the United States, headquartered at the Great Lakes Naval Training Base. I have never been so cold in all my life! Needless to say, I chose my travel based on the time of year. I didn't go to North Dakota in the winter, because I probably would have been snowed in for a month or until spring thaw. My husband always wanted to know why the Army commanded the Central Sector and not the ones headquartered in places like Miami or San Francisco -- didn't even have Texas.

It was important to learn the MEPCOM mission, because of the working relationships with the DCSPER and the Recruiting Command. The Army is the executive agent for the MEPCOM. The MEPCOM commander was rated by the DMPM (Director of Military Personnel Management), and senior rated by an officer in DOD. After a couple of months into my command, I was selected for brigadier general. The list came out in September 1990, a little over a month-and-a-half after we began deployment for Desert Shield. In December, I received a call from LTC Steve Smith, head of GOMO (General Officer Management Office), congratulating me for my appointment as The Adjutant General of the Army (TAG). BG Sikora, who held the job at the time, was going to the Desert to stand up the Theater PERSCOM. So, on 1 February 1991 I became the 57th TAG.

The shooting had not quite started in the Desert, but I assure you the mail had backed up and we had postal problems by the bushel. Casualty Management had expanded to just over 300 people and had taken over several floors in the Hoffman complex. Awards and Decorations had expanded, and all kinds of strength management decisions were being weighed. The TAG job was also one that had never been high on my list of things to do, but after I got there, I realized the TAG was the wartime operator of the Army's personnel system. It had more of a wartime focus then I had realized.

Our most challenging moment during Desert Storm was when we lost all those soldiers to the SCUD missile. Everybody wanted immediate identification of the casualties, but we couldn't give it to them. We didn't have the information. We were under a lot of congressional pressure for a time. It was terribly frustrating with postal and some of the other things. After it was all over, we were able to make some changes that improved our systems. In November 1990, our casualty cards were in what looked like shoeboxes. We began to automate the casualty management process, putting the DD93s on disk and going on from there. What eventuated was the ACIPS -- the Army Casualty Information Processing System, and ACIPS lite, the system our soldiers take to the field. Casualty reports could be transmitted by e-mail and anyone who needed to see them along the way could -- a wonderful improvement over the old method.

We restructured the postal system by implementing new APO (Army Post Office) numbers throughout the Army. The new numbers were aligned with the various geographical areas. Instead of having a number in Europe that was one digit off from, say, the number that routed mail to Panama, we reordered the numbering system to match distinct geographical areas around the globe. The old system caused a lot of problems with mismatch and such. It caused us to spend lots of time with the USPS (United States Postal Service). We created "contingency" APOs, nine digit APOs that designated mail to probable areas of military involvement. The result was a lot changes and a more flexible system. Subsequently, when we deployed to Somalia we experienced great success with postal. It's still working very well -- it's one of the things of which I'm most proud.

Awards and Decorations was another sensitive area of TAG involvement during Desert Storm and Somalia. It's another of those tasks you are expected to perform immediately without any mistakes. Medal of Honor processing for Somalia attracted a tremendous amount of attention because of all the high-level involvement. Purple Heart awards during Desert Storm required a lot of effort, particularly the ones we awarded posthumously. Those were processed and approved at DA. That's another action that receives high level attention during wartime. Casualty, Postal, Awards -- all very intense operations that immediately involve commanders throughout the Army. Commanders, particularly in the casualty management area, realized they had

not paid enough attention to our business during peacetime. Because of the problems, people tried to change doctrine right in the middle of the operation.

Generals are very decisive people -- they want certain information when they want it. They wanted things to happen a certain way, and sometimes it was hard to say, "Sir, you can't do this right now; here's the doctrine. We have to follow it," or, "no, we can't give you that information now." Fortunately, GEN Sullivan, the Vice Chief of Staff at the time, had enough confidence in the system to allow it to work. When we got people to recognize the doctrine, things worked pretty well. Sometimes we had to protect the identities of soldiers who were not always listed on somebody's unit roster -- sensitive stuff. Those identities had to be protected. GEN Sullivan got involved and maintained the process. We've now developed ways of classifying personnel information so that it gets to the appropriate level at PERSCOM without being compromised -- identities are protected, but the information still gets to where it needs to be.

Another of the critical TAG missions is the Physical Disability Agency (PDA). The TAG has had the mission for some time. The Army needed an honest broker to oversee the system and TAG was designated. It used to be a separate organization under the ASAMRA. In fact, GEN Pennington (former TAG) was one of the former commanders of the agency back then. At one point they reorganized, flattened it, and turned it into what we have today. They left the appeals process under the MRA and gave the Physical Disability Agency and its four Physical Evaluation Boards (PEDs) to TAG. The PDA simply became a third hat for the TAG to wear. At the time, they felt like it needed to come out of the medical system. The evaluators are line officers, a Reservist and some crusty old colonels. There's also a civilian medical doctor, a GM-12 or 13. They evaluate a troop's physical ability to continue soldiering and whether or not physical compensation is required. It's an evaluation process that requires a soldier's point of view. It requires lots of working knowledge about the VA (Veterans Administration) system because we use VA standards to do the evaluations.

The PDA role is frustrating, because TAG has accountability for the program but no control. TAG depends greatly on the medical community for much of the personnel processing. They determine processing time and the input into the system. If the information is inaccurate or untimely, it has to be sent back or reevaluated. There are lots of appeals available to individuals, and some people work the system for years. That also makes it very frustrating. The Surgeon General, the DCSPER, and the IG (Inspector General) are trying to get a handle on soldier deployability. The system is long overdue for an overhaul. It's not something the TAG can really do, though. It costs the Army a lot of money to keep people around who should be discharged and who can not perform. It distresses commanders when they have soldiers around who are not deployable.

TAG is the executive director of the Military Postal Service Agency. In addition to being the focal point for the Army postal system, TAG also interfaces with DOD, the executive agent for all the services, and USPS. Christmas mail was always a challenge. TAG has to deal with the USPS on international transportation issues. For instance, when British Airlines stacks the mail and then delivers the stuff off the top instead of the bottom of the pile, you're left with "aged mail." TAG answers to the CINCs (Commander-in Chiefs) on things like that. There are many challenges in that department. I think TAG is the unsung hero of the AG Corps. It's a tough and complex mission. The job is broad and varied. It has the DA Secretariat to answer to, and has the responsibility for running both officer and enlisted promotion boards. TAG is intimately involved with Reserve Component personnel issues in St. Louis and EREC (Enlisted Records and Evaluation Center) in Indianapolis. TAG has the additional challenge of being the functional proponent for SIDPERS III (Standard Installation/Division Personnel System III) and ARCIS (Army Company Information System) or whatever personnel automated system that comes along. ARCIS is a great system and will mean a lot to the Army if we get it fielded.

TAG also manages the Central Clearance Facility that adjudicates security clearances for the Army out of Fort Meade. The Military Intelligence community would like to have the mission, but, here again, it was given to TAG because of the need for an honest broker to oversee the system. It doesn't relate much to the rest of the TAG mission, but it's there. The Army Community Activities Program (ACAP) also belongs to TAG. With BRAC and downsizing, that program has expanded significantly in recent years. We inherited retirement services from the CFSC (Community and Family Support Center). Needless to say, the TAG plate is full. TAG has changed so much in recent years. At one point, the morale and welfare and the printing and publications missions belonged to TAG. Those things went to other communities and TAG assumed some of the hard-core personnel skills. In my opinion TAG has become much more representative of the personnel functions performed by AGs in the field. TAG is the day-to-day operator, the G3 of PERSCOM. Brigadier General Simms (current TAG) and I have pledged to work more closely together. The home of the branch is here with the AG School. It represents the vision and the future of branch, responsible for personnel doctrine. The school writes the field manual and determines the extent of our battlefield functions. The TAG, on the other hand, writes the DA regulations and maintains close operational ties with the personnel community in the field. The school and the TAG need to have a close working relationship, the closer the better. As the TAG, I had the ACIPS fielded before the SSC commander was even aware of it. That should never happen. The relationship between AG School training and the systems being developed by TAG should be a tight one. After all, the school writes personnel doctrine and the lesson plans used to train the people who will operate the systems that TAG tests and fields. TAG is testing SIDPERS and the school will be

responsible for instituting the force structure and the training our folks will need to run it. The link needs to be there.

We've started quarterly meetings. We went to Washington about three months ago and met with BG Simms and his key people. We took up a C-12 full of people. Recently, we had a VTC with them. BG Simms and I knew we could work well together. We understand each other's job and have a great professional respect for what the other does. There's no professional jealousy or one-upsmanship; we both recognize the need for a closer relationship between the school and the TAG. We knew we could do it, but we wanted our staffs to recognize the need also. We wanted to lead by example. When we meet we always have the Finance School commandant with us. With the advent of multi-functional units and the banding together of pay and personnel, it's important that wherever we go, AG and Finance go together. We have to be together to learn each other's language. Having COL Watkins (Finance School commandant) in the room with us during the first meeting was fantastic. There were lots of questions about Finance operations that he was able to answer.

As you know, my last job prior to USASSI was in recruiting as the Deputy Commanding General for the Recruiting Command, West at Fort Knox. In that job I was able to draw upon my MEPCOM experience and in some ways the TAG experience. When I assumed command of USASSI, I felt my previous jobs had prepared me very well for it. It seemed to all fit. I've enjoyed learning more about the Finance Corps and its mission, working the multi-functional unit issues and trying to keep both branches viable and strong.

LEADERSHIP

DR. BOWER: What about your style of leadership? Perhaps it's all your own, or perhaps you've built it from the things you've taken from your mentors over the years.

BG HICKERSON: Some examples you remember because you like them, and there are others you remember because you don't. I admired BG Pat Foot; she was so very confident and always seemed to maintain her cool and her courage under fire. I admired that. When I commanded the battalion in Europe, I worked with LTG Galvin, VII Corps commander. He was a gracious and confident individual. I really admired his leadership style. I do not like confrontation or leaders with low flashpoints -- people who are demeaning and insulting to their subordinates. I don't like being treated that way, and I don't want to treat anyone that way. That's the way I've always been. It's always nice to see someone succeed who has that positive leadership style.

General Gourley also had a very positive leadership style. He seemed to genuinely care for people and look after the folks who worked for him. I don't recall him ever losing his cool. For a year and a half, I worked for COL Bill Merrill, a very senior colonel who had been recalled to active duty about six times. I used to call him the "Wise Man," the conscience of the Army. He had tremendous integrity, and understood the political environment of Congress. He knew how to be effective in that environment without compromising his principles. GEN Reimer's philosophy is to do the right thing. He wants to get away from the "zero defects" mentality. That's very hard to do. He wants us to treat people the way we want to be treated, and that's basically respect for the individual and their own importance -- whether it's a private, sergeant, colonel, or general officer, you have to treat people with respect. It's not a matter of grade, it's just simply a matter of respect for individuals. I feel the Army has that type of leadership now. Today's leaders are predominately that type. However, there are plenty of the others around, people who tend to lead by insult and confrontation. People need to be challenged, but they also want to be respected. They will work hard and respond to the mission if you set high standards.

As part of my general officer training, I attended the Leadership Institute at Greensboro. I was said to possess a so-called "coaching style" of leadership. Don't ask me about the others. I know there are four styles, and we all have to draw from each of them from time to time, but my overall tendency was to fall into the coaching category of leaders. I can't say whether women fall into that category more than men, but it may be more characteristic of women to try to gain consensus from their people, and get them to do things because it's the right thing to do. That's different from using the power you have as a leader to force people into action, and getting them to do something because you've told them to.

SSI MISSION AND ORGANIZATION

DR. BOWER: The Soldier Support Center (SSC) or the Soldier Support Institute (SSI) organization has always varied greatly from the standard TRADOC school model. The command has always included multiple schools in its organization. However, TRADOC, for resource purposes, has consistently recognized it as only one school. For example, in 1974-75, the AG and Finance Schools were dissolved altogether in favor of what was called the U.S. Army Institute of Administration. Since then, the separate identity of the two branches has varied in strength depending upon the resources available to the Training and Doctrine Command and how tolerant TRADOC was of the AG and Finances communities acting like all the other branches in the Army. With the advent of the regimental system in 1987, the identity of the

two branches seemed to reach a high after years of subordination to the greater concept of Personnel Service Support. "Downsizing" seems to be reversing the trend once again, going toward consolidation of missions and organizations. Is the Soldier Support Institute and other force structure initiatives that tend to reconsolidate, a healthy sign for the AG and Finance missions and their ability to support the Army of the future?

BG HICKERSON: Considering the options, the SSI is a good thing. Is it optimum? No. I and others would prefer a general officer commandant for each branch. The AG branch is the seventh largest branch of the Army's fifteen. Every branch larger and several that are smaller has a two-star commandant. I'm always at a loss as to why that's the case. Maybe I'm being naive, but I don't understand why we don't have the same status or why we've never had it. Having said that, it's essential that there be a general officer in command here, since our school commandants are colonels. The size of the AG Branch and the breadth and diversity of the AG mission -- postal, band, and all the rest -- suggests, at least for the time being, that the SSI commander needs to be an AG general officer. In the future with the further development of multi-functional units and such, it could probably be either AG or Finance. It was a wise decision to give the two branches at least one brigadier general to represent them at the table and be able to wave the flag. Flag status opens doors and enables the general officer to act as an external coordinater for the interests of the branches. The technical expertise and the leadership of our branch schools is provided by two extremely capable colonel commandants. Their jobs are big and they are important to the Army. Considering everything else that's going on in the Army today, they're both holding their own with all the others. When the SSI general officer can't go to a meeting, it's hard for the colonels to get a seat at the table. So, that's been the challenge from my perspective. It's a very important role for the brigadier, and it's absolutely essential. Our colonels would be run over by all the star power.

Without much of a personnel or finance background, it must have been difficult for the two-star combat arms officers who commanded the SSC. I don't know how it worked. People ask me about commanding CASCOM (Combined Arms Support Command) as an AG. I'd say, "Well, I don't think that's a very good idea, because I'm not a logistician. Logistics is very complex. CASCOM is multi-functional too; they have three branches. It simply would not be a good thing." On the other hand, it's not always a bad thing to view our work in the context of the bigger PSS picture. Sometimes PSS, as a community of functions, should take precedence over branches. The broader the perspective, the broader the following. Sometimes that's better. We need to ensure that PSS remains distinct from logistics, with an identity of its own within the combat service support framework and the sustainment mission area. Nowhere in DOD, the Army, or on the joint staff is PSS subordinated to logistics. You always find a logistician and a personnelist. They are never one and the same

person. You have a Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics (DCSLOG) and a Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (DCSPER), a G1 and a G4 on the general staff. For the sake of efficiency, we've tended to blur those lines at our level. That's my big concern -- that logistics and PSS interface appropriately.

We need to interface in the same way the logistics community interfaces. You have to do that, because you're not alone on the battlefield -- you never function as a single entity. It's always the team concept, and for us it involves human resources. You could almost substitute "human resources" for the PSS concept and the broader scope of our mission. In getting outside the box, the OPMS (Officer Personnel Management System) study groups looking at these things has tended to blur the lines separating the branches and has tried to group by functions. When FORSCOM looked at that, it almost resulted in the G1 coming under the G4. You can take this thing too far, and that would have been too far. We're struggling to get personnel and finance units together -- so, don't try to turn us into logisticians too. We're not logisticians. Ultimately, it all has to fit together on the battlefield. Ideally, we should continue to focus on skill competence within our own branches, but be tuned into the broader picture. Our outlook has to be broader, and by looking beyond our own branch interests these days, the branch actually becomes stronger.

DR. BOWER: How is PSS doing within the CASCOM framework?

BG HICKERSON: It goes up and down. When they consolidated the integrating missions in the early 1990s, CASCOM didn't retain any personnel spaces to perform PSS integration. That's been the challenge -- trying to effectively communicate our concerns and issues to CASCOM headquarters without people there who understand PSS. On that basis, though, I see things getting better in two ways. The first is the recognition of SSI as a PSS coordination center. This is a coordination role, not an integrating role. So, we don't integrate doctrine for chaplains or develop training for the JAG, but we do coordinate the PSS activity as a whole. For instance, SSI coordinates the PSS Functional Area Assessment (FAA). We will pull it all together, ensuring that the briefings are together and that everyone's rehearsed. Then the PSS community will go forward together to do the briefings. Secondly, COL McMillan, our new Soldier Support Institute liaison officer, goes to work this week at CASCOM headquarters. So, we have some eyes and ears on site now. He'll be in a position to keep us abreast of what's going on at CASCOM. If there's a disconnect between here and there, we ought to be able to jump on it a lot quicker. He's really going to be a big help to us, because he'll be seated at the table when CASCOM discusses funding for combat development, etc. He'll see that our functions are represented and the resources are passed down to us.

DR. BOWER: Has our relationship with CASCOM been positive?

CASCOM views PSS as subordinate to logistics and as a part of logistics. In their eyes we are not an equal or separate function. We'll have to educate them. I don't believe anyone else in DOD or the Army thinks that way. That seems to be something that the logistics community has devised in the last five or six years. We've been working hard to overcome it. We still have the DCSPER as the functional proponent for all of PSS. GEN Stroup, the DCSPER over the last few years, has taken control of things and pulled the PSS Community together in much the same way the logistics community functions. The logisticians have the CASCOM commander, the DCSLOG, and the Army Materiel Command (AMC) commander. Within the PSS community you have a comparable structure. GEN Stroup has looked out for the entire community and did a lot to point us in the right direction. He has tremendous credibility with the leadership of the Army and TRADOC. We're still in transition from the TRADOC reorganization that dissolved our integrating mission. We're learning how to do that through CASCOM now. We have some very important PSS advocates working to help us get these relationships clarified.

DR. BOWER: In my interview with Major General Brooks last year, he told me that SSI lost heavily in the realignment business with CASCOM. How healthy is SSI in comparison to the rest of the Army? I know everyone's hurting as a result of the drawdown, but how does SSI stack up?

BG HICKERSON: I'm concerned about all of TRADOC, the training centers in particular. The resources are not what they should be. It makes it difficult to do the mission. I think the Combat Arms branches are still healthier, but everybody in CASCOM is hurting. Within CASCOM , we're doing about as well as the rest of the schools. CASCOM, as a whole, has taken greater cuts and made greater sacrifices than the rest of TRADOC. Maybe that's the way Army leadership wanted it. If that's the case, they've accomplished their goal. Despite the realignment, we're in good shape compared to the other CASCOM schools. Our two branch schools were able to retain their combat and training development functions. Although we're very short on people to do those things, the retention of those functions has turned out to be tremendous benefit. I will tell you that there are those in CASCOM who would like to give those functions back to the schools, but, because of the cuts we've taken, they don't have that option. That's one of the reasons why CASCOM has reorganized into branch specific teams, giving the branches more of a sense of identity. That's why the SSI Liaison Office is so important. It provides a focal point for AG and Finance in the larger CASCOM structure. By the way, the JAG Corps, at their

request, is hooking up with us and their officer is going to work for our officer at CASCOM headquarters.

Although we're fragile from the resource standpoint, we're still stronger than the other three CASCOM branch schools. I don't think the other CASCOM schools like the Combined Logistics Officer Advanced Course (CLOAC). We might combine some of the OAC core subjects to gain some efficiencies and do some joint training, but I expect us to maintain the individuality of the AG and Finance branches. I would not like to see us lose any more than what we've lost in the last six years. We lost big time, and, compared to the rest of TRADOC, CASCOM lost big time -- 14% more reductions in CASCOM than the rest of TRADOC. I know the other CASCOM commandants are hurting like we are.

DR. BOWER: Under the advent of multi-functional units that combine pay and personnel missions on the battlefield, there is an inference of a close functional relationship between the AG and Finance branches. In this context, we've heard talk again about merging the two branches, an issue that seems to come around at least once every other fiscal year. Are there certain developments in today's Army that make a merger more feasible now than it used to be?

BG HICKERSON: It's being considered by the OPMS study group. My argument, to anyone who will listen, is that we can save structure by reorganizing the way we do business on the battlefield, but we shouldn't combine the branches. They're just too different. What common ground we do share is in the pay and personnel function and the automated system we're developing to manage that. The other thing is our common focus on service to the soldier. What efficiencies we gain from consolidation will come from our battlefield structure and the joining of command and control elements of our units. We'll maintain within the battalions the individual expertise -- the separate finance and postal teams, etc. It may be we'll have to task organize on the battlefield to give commanders and soldiers what they need. We can send out representatives of the functions in one team but, I don't see our people becoming interchangeable. I have a hard time dealing with the logic that suggests our functions are interchangeable. It seems to me that whenever they make infantry and armor functions interchangeable, we ought to be able to do the same with personnel and finance. I'm hoping logic will prevail.

The other things we have to be concerned about is the movement to civilianize our functions and the emergence of joint information systems. Those things may have a greater impact on our future than the proposed merger of the branches. Everybody is using the Marine Corps as a model. They're a ground combat unit, but they don't have a personnel or finance structure organic to their field units. Their

systems are centralized. So, as we become smaller, we'll have to deal with those factors as well.

A lot of things look simple to do from the outside looking in, but once you get inside of them, you discover it's not the case. It's a constant battle, and the challenge is to anticipate the questions by having some really good answers. We have to be concerned about the logistics issue, the branch merger issue, the joint issue, and the desire of some to civilianize our functions. The challenges are there. It's not going to get any easier. My biggest immediate concern is being able to maintain training standards with the resources we have available to us. We have junior captains teaching other captains and we're transitioning to distance learning without the resources to buy the technology. We're not the only branch struggling with this. All of us are. This is not an "us and them" issue. Because of resourcing, we're going to have to make some tough decisions. Along the way, we have to make sure we do the right thing by the people we train.

DR. BOWER: What do you see in the future for the SSI commander and the school commandant who would like to become more involved with training, setting standards and spending time with students, when the majority of their time now is devoted mostly to proponent and combat development issues?

BG HICKERSON: I don't see it improving. I wasn't able to do it; BG Snyder wasn't able to do it. If I had my choice, I'd rather go down and be around the soldiers and watch them train. That's one luxury afforded the Fort Jackson commander. It seems we're always fighting for survival, and it's intense. It takes priority because it's your existence, your livelihood, and your future. I don't see that getting better, but the good news is that we have good people doing the training, and we know it's being done right. You have to have confidence in them. So, we try to recognize them, thank them, and give them well-deserved praise. It's not ideal, but the choices are few.

DR. BOWER: Would you like to say anything in closing?

BG HICKERSON: Well, there is some good news. We've got an AG general officer about ready to become the DCSPER of the Army. This new building is gorgeous; it's a wonderful place. It instills a lot of pride. People still do things for pride, for motherhood and apple pie and all that. You'll stick around if you like something. Promotions and money aside, people still do things out of pride and job satisfaction. We have the potential here to provide that. I really feel good about this. I look forward to coming back here and visiting every chance I get just to watch the trees grow and the new buildings go up. We have a lot of outstanding people working

for us, and a lot more coming up through the ranks. I feel good about our civilian workforce and all our good NCOs out there. We've got lots of strengths in our community, and we need to use them to our best advantage, remaining proactive and assertive with the number of issues facing us. We're in very good shape right now. We still need to be concerned about the future, but everybody in the Army needs to be concerned about that.