

TAPE #45--SIDE A
JAY COBURN--NOVEMBER 18, 1981

KP He said...

JC He said. The Army was good to me, I was good to the Army. I drove out that gate and. . ." I believe that was Fort (Bracken?). He said, "I felt really good about it. It was the right time." He said, "I had a little trouble leading up to that, saying it was the right time." He said, "But when the time came I felt really good about it, it was the right time." So I got the impression that there was some kind of, let's say maybe a year maybe even two years prior to his getting out, maybe there was a struggle going on in deciding. Maybe the military not giving him what he wanted or whatever. I am not sure of the details. I asked him had he been involved since then. He said, "Now that is over, now it is over, now it was Lucy, and Big ? and catching big bass in the pond." I thought that was pretty neat. That here was a guy who could spend his whole life that could make that transition with such ease and really enjoy, there was no doubt in your mind, he thoroughly enjoyed what he was doing with Lucy. Now when Lucy died, that wasn't the case. That is what I am saying. To me the transition that the man made from this dedicated soldier for the bulk of his life, and then just being able to chop this off. There are not very many people who can do that. Chop that off and go into that other life and the way he described it, there was no doubt in your mind that he got as much self-satisfaction if not more from those seven years that he spent on that farm with Lucy as he did in all the others. It was amazing to me. I thought that was so neat. It showed a dimension of him that I think a lot of people really miss. They never get to see. In following that up and having met some people that he had actually served with, like Dick and some other people, it is very apparent to me that he did not normally share a lot of things with his peers. I felt rather fortunate to be able to see that as a dimension that a lot of other people did not get to see. I think that unfortunate because he was a multifaceted human being. I walked in thinking the

JC same thing. That here was this Colonel that has a reputation thing
Cont. long for being the meanest, baddest, mother-. . . And the surprising
part about it is it was that, and he could be that, but he could be a
lot of other things. I don't many people got to see that side of him.

KF Did he tell you why he went back into the Military in 1953.

JC I think he did, Ken, but I can't remember. Joe probably does.
Because I remember the three of us talked about that a lot. But I
cannot remember specifically what his key decision making points
were. Except the fact that he didn't like what was going on. It wasn't
a very long period of time during that break in service.

KF Maybe he was, I think it was seven years.

JC I'd be surprise if it was that long.

KF That's what Stanley recorded. 1946-53. Actually when I asked you
about Korea, you thought I meant career. Whereas, actually I meant
Korea.

JC Oh, Korea. Oh.

KF Because that is when he went back, '53 I believe.

JC Oh, I thought you were talking about career. I don't remember him
talking very much about Korea. He didn't make very many references
to it.

KF He must have been in training for most of the '50's. He must have
been training other people. Maybe that was when he went to the
Philippines.

JC He was in the Philippines because he talked about the Philippines.

KF What did he say?

JC I don't remember too many specifics but he did. . . I think probably that is where the motorcycle things took place. Another assignment that he mentioned specifically was his assignment in Turkey. Where he must have been the senior military advisor to the Turkish department. And that whole role was one of consulting, or getting the Turkish army up to speed. Or at least that was my impression of the way he described it. It was really comical to listen to him go through his opinion of the Turkish army. He would go into great detail of how bad they were. How with time, they learned. As he felt most people could learn with the proper training. I don't remember him talking about Korea at all.

KF Panama

JC Talk some about Panama. I think he enjoyed his assignment in Panama. I can't remember the specifics. He talked about some rioting and stuff going on in Panama. Some kind of weapon they were using in Panama, some kind of riot control type of things. He enjoyed. The way I remember it, he enjoyed the way he spent his time in Panama. I think that was accompanied, maybe it wasn't, I know the Turkey was accompany because he had his family with him. Panama may have been accompanied. I'm not sure what all went on there. I don't know what that stands out, but he talked about. . . He talked about being in Laos. He lived with the tribes. He had a lot of respect for them in that regards.

KF Did he ever mention a girl there?

JC What girl? You mean like a daughter, or . . .

KF A lover? No hints? Stanley thinks he has a child over there.

JC Doesn't fit.

KF Doesn't fit with him?

JC No and I will try to tell you why, in my opinion. I think it was on the (Sautu?) where he went into a lot of the individual relationships that he had with some of the people, troupes involved, where he specific discipline problem. I remember because it stands out. He felt so strongly about setting the example, and he was such a principled person on top of that, that I . . . maybe, but I really doubt it. You would have to . . . I suppose that if he was really totally on his own. . which I don't think he ever was. . . He said though that a lot of what he did in Laos he did on his own, but I would really discount that. The only condition where it would be possible would be where he was totally on his own. There is no other possibility of an American. And especially people that he was responsible for would be involved. There is one thing he was not, and he was not very hypocritical. He is that principled. I just can't image him being able to pull that off.

KF This was a Princess Stanley thinks it was. It is all hints, Art never told him, but Art hinted. And one of things that Stanley gathered was that she was the daughter of the local, whatever he was--Chief, Prince, King,--and that Simons said, half jokingly, didn't even say, hinted half jokingly, that this part of the deal getting the local King's help. It was all part of the trust. The King trusting him, or tribal hospitality. Stanley is by no means sure. It is interesting that everybody around here says it couldn't have happened. But Simons would show you, to some extent, what you wanted to see. Several people around here think that Simons agreed with their opinions. Maybe he did but he had a way of when he was talking to you. You got the impression that he was with you on all this stuff you were telling and so, he may, No. Although everybody has reacted the way you have reacted, in that it is very, very unlikely. There may have been sides to him that you did not see.

JC That is possible. I won't xxxxx that. Knowing his feelings for Lucy. There is probably not anything he would not do for accomplishment of the mission. So when you say it in the light that you just said it, it dawned on me then... When he got into the "Jack Armstrong" with us so heavy, there is probably not anything he wouldn't do for the accomplishment of the mission. So in context, that may be, I doubt it. If he was operating on his own it would be a lot more likely than otherwise. It is possible.

KF We will never know it.

JC No, that is true. Now that I think about it . . . We were talking about females, he had a... My impression was almost, a fatherly interest in Anita. Has anybody talked about Anita?

KF I don't think so.

JC The stewardess on the airplane. . .

KF Ross's 707?

JC Right.

KF No, there was another stewardess on the Braniff that Ross knew.

JC Different one. She stayed here in Dallas after we got back, for a little while. And like I say, I would almost, they got to be very very close. It wasn't one of, at least I never got the impression, it was anything of a sexual nature at all. When he talked about her, it was almost like a father talking about a daughter.

KF Did he take her out to dinner and stuff?

JC I don't know.

KF I had better talk to her. I will have to find out where she is. You said right at the beginning that during these talks, you having been a recruiter, you did a little analysis. Tell me a little about that. What do you do when you are a recruiter? What did you do to Simons.

JC Well, just interviewing. If you have never had the job of trying to pick somebody's brain apart, you might not be as adept as that as someone who has, since that was my job. There are things you can find out about people during a normal conversation. Since I was in recruiting, there were techniques that we were taught and we employed. You know, to ask questions that have open-ended questions as opposed to close-ended questions.

KF To get them to open up.

JC To get them to open up. Ask a lot of whys. And that is really all I meant by that. I get accused of it by my friends all the time. In a social environment you are suppose to be social, not picking this guys apart, but I have been accused by others of doing that a little too much. It is just a . . . I have an interest in people, what makes people do the things they do, and motivates them to do things.

KF What do you think motivated Simons?

JC Well, I think there are two segments of his life as I see it. Again, he didn't talk much about his boy who was growing up, or his mother and father. There may be more segments than that, but I am talking about Military on. There actually three segments, but at the time I was looking at it there were two segments. That's the military and after the military. You really have to divide them up, I think. Because I think he was a different person and motivated by some different things. I think during the military he was motivated by pride in country. Somewhat motivated by fraternal, the interaction that takes place when you get a small group of people, he always somehow ended up with. Motivated in the direction of getting the job done and putting all the pieces together and doing it fine fashion. Each of those pieces. I think he really threw himself into each one of those.

KF Yah, but why? Some people do it because they want to get rich, they want to be famous, they want to pay the mortgage, they have to support there family. Some people do it because they were driven by dominating mothers, the mother is always in the back of their minds telling them to try only; dominating fathers. All these reasons. There a million reasons why people do what they do in life. Simons did not want to make a lot of money. That was not one of his ambitions. He doesn't seem to want to be famous. He seems to have wanted to be a General, but it doesn't seem to have been a dominating factor in his life. His family certainly wasn't a dominating factor in his life, at least while he was in the military. As far as I can make out he did not have the kind of parents who hypnotized him into being a man with a great deal of drive. So what was the answer?

JC He did talk about his father some. His father evidently was in the clothing business. Simons thought he was a fairly creative person. Industrious, business oriented individual. I wanted to throw that in since you had asked me if he had said anything about his parents. He had toyed around with designing some uniforms and that lead into what his father did. But that is the only time that I remember him talking about his father. I have learned some things about his parents afterward, but I keep that in perspective. I think, pride in his country was a dominating thing and serving was certainly dominating. Doing his bit. Those are the only things that come to mind. Somewhere, intermingled in all that, having to be . . . I always sensed that he needed to be in the middle of it. Active. Like when he talked about the public information officer's job. Eventhough he was active, that wasn't active to him. He wasn't in the middle of something. He wasn't doing the kinds of things that he really got turned on by. The things he talked about most were the things were involved in taking a group of people, and how he was able to achieve it, mold them into a team or a unit that was ascribing to achieve this objective. Whether it was what he was able, impart to those people along the way, achievement in other words. Seeing where you start from, and where you get to. And the satisfaction that that's got to bring to him. But I know it has something to do with the people.

JC Especially watching you get to the colonel and Lt. Colonel rank. There
Cont. are a lot of different routes you can gravitate to that don't involve as
much interaction with the people as Simons tended to gravitate to. I
know it had something to do with that. I said fraternal, that is
probably not the right word, but it has something to do with that
interaction with other people. I don't know if he considered himself a
great teacher.

KF Seems to me that he must have hated to do a slip-shot job at
anything, do a bad job of anything. He was such a perfectionist in all
of these things. So I wonder if pride in doing a good job was a big
thing.

JC I am sure it was. Now whether it was the dominating things or not.
... Pride. . . He talked a lot about success. We're not going to do
this if we are not going to be successful. We are going to be
successful. The reason we are doing all these things is because we are
going to be successful. We have got to have a 95% chance of success,
or we don't do it. Things like that tells me that pride in
accomplishment of the task, whatever it was, was certainly in the
background. Not to extreme. . . There are a lot of people that have a
false sense of pride that may drive them on . . . kidding themselves
from that point of view. I never got that impression with Colonel
Simons. He was a realist for damn sure. Very practical, get the job
done oriented. Just like what motivated him then, after he got out of
the military. That is a different thing. What motivated him after that.
He made that transition that I thought was so beautiful. Maybe there
is some commonality.

KF Still he was intent on doing a good job of raising those pigs and
caring for those dogs, and that little metal working shop.

JP And his gunsmithing.

KF That's right, that is what I meant. He would have called it relaxing, it would not have been relaxing to me, but . . oh, he did relax. That is probably the nearest he ever came to relaxing.

JP Therapy.

KF He used the word therapy. That is interesting.

JP Yah, definitely. As much as he grew in those seven years close to Lucile, the motivation at that point had to be somewhat oriented to her. I don't know if it was a making up of what had transpired before or what it was, but he sure made the switch. You know it had to be that way or he would not have been so devastated by the loss of her. If that had never occurred, let's say she died the year he got out of the service, the devastation would not have been there, in my opinion.

KF I see.

JP It was during those seven years that that really took place, in my opinion. That is what I said that he really wasn't lecturing when he said don't take that for granted, Jay, don't take that for granted. It was kind of telling me that he did. He only realized it after he got out of the service. You know at that point. Dick said this, and Dick probably knew him better than, other than Lucile, anyone else on this earth including his sons. I mean, really knew what the man was all about. Dick seemed to think that our mission coming off when it did snapped it out of him. That if something like that hadn't come along, he probably would have just stayed in his room down there and just withered away. But it did truly snap him out of it. He got right back into it. What motivated him during this time. He was a bereaved man, not doing much of anything and accepting that, not doing much to get out of that and all of a sudden this thing pops up. Again, I don't think it was money.

KF No he couldn't get paid anyway.

JP Couldn't have been that.

KF Or at least he refused payment.

JP He said that he was so taken by Ross. I don't know that he ever told Ross this. I don't know that I ever told Ross this. But he said to me, maybe Joe was there too. He said, "I was so taken by a man that for no apparent personal gain was willing to do to the extent that Perot was willing to do it, what he did for my guys after Sonta, I felt that there was nothing I could ever do to repay that. That was so meaningful to me as those guys leader and here comes a guy who was willing to do all that." I don't know that I ever told Ross that?

KF You didn't. Ross doesn't know that. Ross suspects that but he doesn't know it for sure. He told me a couple times.

JP In my conversations with the Colonel I was curious about him meeting Ross and all that happened. How there could be this kinship they had built with one another. So, the Colonel was very open about it. He talked about it the first time he had met the man. He talked about being taken with that. He talked about the next time that Ross called him which was to do something in Laos. Around the POW thing. He didn't say anything about pay. He felt that he needed to repay that. He felt that Ross had done something that was very meaningful. When noone else. He talked about having to fight to get those guys the awards and decorations that, in his mind, they warranted. They came back with Army commendation metals or something. He just blew up, he got on a plane and talked with whoever, he raised a stink. So it is maybe a payback thing that motivated him to do our thing. It is good for the book I suppose and maybe it has something to do with it.

KF He may well have realized that this is the kind of thing that could get him out of his depression.

JP It is possible.

KF A man so on the ball, would have realized that about himself. In fact, I come to think of it it is surprising that he didn't analyze what was happening to him and get out of that depression. Evidently it just hit him too hard. Was it you who told me that was his breaking point?

JP (Nod, I guess)

KF Somebody else must have told me that. He said, everyone has a breaking point, I didn't think I had one, but that was my breaking point.

JP That fits.

KF It was evidently the one thing in his life that he couldn't handle. He had been able to handle just about everything that came along, this he could not handle. So that is what he meant by breaking point, I imagine.

JP Something had finally become. . . . He could not do anything about it, it was beyond his control and obviously she was very important to him at that point. I guess that should be a lesson. . . .

KF I think that we have probably worn out for this morning.

End of Tape.