Forest History Foundation, Inc.
St. Paul, Minnesota

Oral History Interview

with

Wendell R. Becton, Lt. Colonel, CE, USAR

Panama City, Florida
January 31, 1958

Harold Barnett, Civilian Forester at Fort Gordon, Georgia, also participated in this interview.

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Colonel Becton is with the Engineering Section, Headquarters Third Army, Fort McPherson, Georgia.

ELWOOD R. MAUNDER: Colonel, I wonder if you could just start us off here by telling us where you came from originally, where you were born, and something about your education that led you eventually into the field of forestry?

WENDELL R. BECTON: Nativity is Alabama—specifically Mobile. I went to the University of Georgia for basic forestry training and from there to Yale School of Forestry for my master's degree.

ERM: When was that?

WRB: I finished in 1929. From there I went briefly to the Forest Service and then back to work for a private landowner in south Alabama, Mr. Ben Hay, as his forest land forester. That carried on for approximately two to three years, and from that I went out to an E.C.W. work—specifically in Texas with the CCC operations.

ERM: The E.C.W. being the Emergency Conservation Works Administration?

WRB: That's right. And my particular work was as forester in the CCC work in Texas, for the State of Texas. They were managing their own lands and carrying out special activities in forest management with CCC labor. From there I went to the U.S. Forest Service as a district ranger in Region Two, which was on the Pike National Forest. When the War came along I was commissioned directly into the Air Force and went overseas early in '43 and was connected with heavy bombing missions with the Air Force. From there I went to the Civil Affairs and Military Government section of the Army where we were trained in Shrivenham, England, for continental operations. Shrivenham was a school center. At the behest of Colonel A. H. Lloyd, the head of the Oxford School of Forestry at Oxford University, and who was the forester in SHAEF, a group of foresters was brought in from all the continental counties and set up as a unit in ETOUSA, which is European Theater of Operations USA. The specific assignment was the supply section of the Chief of Engineers. This group in conjunction with the

continental foresters (there were French, Belgians and British) was specifically concerned with wood supplies that the armed services would need in continental operations, to secure them from local sources if possible in order to save shipping space which was so critical at the time. Every time space was saved that way, something more vital could be sent. In that program they were trying to get as many of the heavy engineers' materials locally as possible. Cement, gravel or sand, wood products and all those things were in the program. The section was specifically concerned with the wood procurement. That included poles, cross-ties and lumber. We had a fear, based on Intelligence information, that the Germans in retreating were lively to tear up the rail lines so thoroughly that we'd have to replace them completely, including the cross-ties. (Practically no railway lines were destroyed in the manner we had feared. American and British bombing efforts had done the bulk of the destruction.) So there was a program of procuring cross-ties which began in this country, I heard afterwards, in order to supply what we thought we would be needed, but as far as I know there was never one cross-tie shipped over. We were able to find local supplies for all that were needed.

ERM: Soon after landing?

WRB: Soon after landing we began to uncover great piles of wood materials.

ERM: Did you move into Europe right on the heels of the invasion?

WRB: As soon as the battle lines moved forward enough to permit. We went into Army area; we went into divisional operational areas—anywhere where there was some kind of wood. We went in to see what there was and to establish liaison with the local officials. We established the regular procurement procedure that would have been carried on under any circumstances. The provisional government had procedures whereby requisitioning of materials would be through old established procedures and would be carried on in a regular manner as had prevailed before either we or the Germans arrived on the scene. In that manner we worked with them and let them manage the production. Their production came from their forests in the regular way through good management practices using local facilities for manufacturing.

ERM: In other words, you disrupted the normal forestry practices and manufacturing procedures of those countries as little as possible in accomplishing your objective?

WRB: We, in effect, were the only market at the time. French mills didn't have any other means of moving their material. There were great accumulations as a result of the lack of transportation caused by way destruction. Therefore, we were able to find great quantities. It was a matter of picking it up and getting it into our supply channels, which we managed by liaison between supply units and local officials.

ERM: Did you find that the Germans had taken the native forestry people out as slave labor for their purposes, or had they been left behind?

WRB: They were in place except those who had died or something else had happened to them. As far as I know they didn't take any with them. They had to retreat too fast. They were getting out of there only saving their own skins. Many of them walked out of Paris or any way they could find to go as soon as the invasion had begun. The movement was so fast they couldn't take anything with them.

ERM: They abandoned a good many of their own supplies?

WRB: They left everything. It was a pell-mell flight, just getting out and away.

ERM: Well, how would you contrast, Colonel, the military use and organization of wood supplies for military purposes from local sources in World War II with the operation that Colonel Greeley headed up in World War I?

WRB: The principal difference being that we had some production units during this second World War similar to those in the first World War; however, there were not as many troop units involved as there were in the first World War, and we had them do very little of their own cutting. They were our local managers of the concerns, so to speak, managing the local mills. Through our organization they would perform liaison between the local officials and the nearest military supply units.

ERM: Of course, the demand was a different kind of demand, too, wasn't it, in World War II? In World War I there was a tremendous demand for trench timbers, wasn't there?

WRB: I'm not too familiar with that, but as far as I know I believe you could say it was pretty much the same. The main thing was boards, boards, boards—one inch, two inch boards for construction purposes. Anything the Army needed and had to construct in a hurry like hospitals and barracks was made of wood. I believe that was true of both the World Wars. We found that the American forestry units could increase their production by as much as five times by managing local facilities instead of cutting it themselves, and it made better relationship with the local countries we were moving into. They were very pleased with that type of operation in which they were taking the principal actions In fact, in some cases they did the entire work. We would only place orders on their organizations. They had the equivalent of our National Lumber Manufacturers' Association that was reborn, and we worked as much through it as we could, when we could find it in operation. For example, we sent one officer and an enlisted man to Bordeaux to perform the whole operation—just those two people—that Colonel Greeley and his unit performed during the first World War through management of the local resources with the local organizations.

ERM: What did you find the Germans had done during the course of their occupation? Did they follow a similar pattern of practice?

WRB: I don't think they secured very much material from French sources. I mention France because that's where the principal source was found. We did get quite a bit out

of Belgium but France was the big producer. I don't believe they bothered French production to any amount. They didn't build much there; they used existing facilities. In most cases they just moved in and used the facilities by simply pushing the people out. The only thing that had happened was through the Allied bombing transportation had been disrupted so they couldn't carry on normal functions, and much of the lumber supplies just kept puling up, piling up everywhere. That was beyond the ability of the Germans to stop.

ERM: Did you find that the Germans had has to evacuate so fast that they weren't able to destroy lines of communication and transportation?

WRB: As far as I know they didn't even attempt to. They didn't have to because our bombing efforts took care of that. We did most of the destruction of the transportation system with our war effort. The RAF was destroying their locomotives by the hundreds, whish was a serious factor. This meant so many less trains that could be hauled. We found that they did have shortages of lubricating oils and greases of various kinds and they couldn't lubricate the bearings of their cars. They even used butter as a lubricant. So many little things like that would develop that they didn't have any way of supplying, and the total of that was quite considerable.

ERM: What was your own personal relationship to this whole plan?

WRB: I was one of the foresters who had an assigned territory to supervise, which was the eastern part of France where most of the production of French lumber came from.

ERM: And you were in command of that operation in that section?

BECTION: I was assigned to the territory to manage in this respect: to carry out liaison with the French administrators and put them in connection with the American units who would be taking the production. Some of these were English forestry units while others were general supply units. American supply units were always on the move, it was a constant job of visiting and letting some new unit know who and which officials they should look to. Those units then would work with local officials and the local officials would tell them what supplies they were short of and were needed for production, and their job was to find the shortages and supply them so that production could be brought back to normal. We were able to find in our captured materials depots many of the shortages that were needed, and it was then a matter of getting them out of these captured materials depots and shifting them over to the local production facilities through the French officials. We always operated through local officials. They would first take an inventory and tell us what was needed and we'd use that inventory and would draw supplied through our own local units from depots as much as possible. For example, we found great reserves of saws in Paris that were needed over in eastern France in the mills. They were there because it hadn't been possible to move them out for so long. So it was a matter then of sending a truck over to pick up a lot of saws from Paris and delivering them to the mills that needed them. These forestry units and other types of engineer supply units would perform that mission. We had many types of

engineer units performing that work. There weren't near enough forestry units to do the job so we just had to put whoever we could on the hob, and we did it. They then would be a part of the advance section troops or base supply troops. We always worked from the top echelons of local officials down. Forestry officers were so few in number that I, for example, had all of eastern France, and I had to work in as high echelons as possible, such as departments, then on down the line. If there was any time left I did go to the counties and sometimes to the local mills, but that wasn't often.

ERM: Where was your base of operations?

WRB: Paris. The reason for that was that the provisional French government had to make requisitions for the material before we could secure it. That was by prior arrangement between our government and the provisional French government. They then would give a requisition of the material in accordance with what we needed. Mail system being disrupted, we often took the requisitions out in person and delivered them to the officials, but they were official in every way and they were so recognized as official even through their government hadn't transmitted them through their own channels.

ERM: And by this method you found that you got more efficient delivery and service of your needs and kept the good will of the people of France in the process?

WRB: We were the market and they didn't have any other at the time. The other thing was that they managed it themselves which pleased them highly, and their production was well over 90 percent of the normal capacity after we got all this arrangement moving. We were able to get all the supplies of lumber we needed over there instead of having to ship any. The only lumber that came over from this side came as crating or ballast or bracing material in ships. That was used and shipped over there. All was produced locally. In fact, we had visitors at various times who came over to find out why we didn't order any lumber. They anticipated a great need, but we satisfied the demands and were able to secure all that was needed. We not only saved shipping over the ocean but we saved it on land. The units got lumber locally at the point of need instead of having to haul it great distances.

ERM: Of course, you moved with the advance always as fast as you could to take advantage of new sources of supply in new areas that were occupied?

WRB: As soon as any as uncovered we moved in and set up the same system everywhere.

ERM: How many of you were there in this total program? I take it that you were a relatively small group.

WRB: I think there was a total of 15 American officers, Allied officers.

ERM: Were they all foresters?

WRB: Yes, all the continental officers in the section were foresters. They were foresters who had been at home for years on the continent. They had got out of there when the Germans came, and they were just coming back home, so to speak. They knew exactly where to look to get things moving, and we, of course, working with them got the benefit of that.

ERM: This concept, the whole philosophy and development of the plan, was originally thought out by Colonel Lloyd of England, is that right?

WRB: That's correct. He had the conception and instigated it through the American and other armies operating through SHAEF. The ETOUSA operations were the center of all Allied Army operations, not only American, handling all the Allied Army requirements. It was logical to have that section perform the mission. Of course, we had the benefit of Intelligence information that the Oxford School of Forestry had accumulated, and we used that to know what was to be expected over there, and to understand what we should be able to get out of each section of France and Germany and what their normal production should be.

ERM: In other words, you had a pretty good idea when you needed a specific kind of wood supply where the mill was that could produce it?

WRB: We not only had a good idea; we had the street and the address, the number of people involved and what its production per day was. All of that information was on file in England.

ERM: Had that information been supplied Intelligence by this lumber manufacturer's association in France?

WRB: Well, it happens that all over the continent they have what they call a "Baedeker," which is an inventory and an accounting of every industry there is over there and every kind of license that had been issued. Anything that had been licensed was in the files. This licensing system has been in effect for years and has been published in directories, copies of which were available in England.

ERM: Before the war?

WRB: Yes, the British had that long ago and we just had to use those books. In fact, there wasn't a single business that wasn't in those files.

ERM: Did you find that lumber manufacturing plants had suffered any real substantial war damage?

WRB: Very little. Their principal damage resulted from not being able to get supplies as they needed them and therefore they'd run down. The plants would deteriorate through

lack of being able to get supplies as they would normally. So it was a matter then of filling that need.

ERM: During the German occupation of France at about what level had they been producing? At what percentage capacity?

WRB: I couldn't answer that, but I assume that they were pretty close to normal for a year of two years prior to our coming. Pretty close to normal I'd guess.

ERM: I was wondering whether the deterioration of plant and the disruption of the market might have diminished their output substantially.

WRB: I believe it was a gradual slowing down. The Germans pretty much let France alone. Their objective was to draw out of there so they would let those facilities carry on as fully as they could, and they just didn't bother them is what it amounted to. If they wanted something, they'd try to get it through the recognized government.

ERM: I presume that the problems of administering and direction as program like this were different in the early stages of the invasion than they were in the later stages of occupation. Can you spell that out a little?

WRB: Well, in the later movements of our being in France there was a gradual return to normalcy in their administration. In fact, our demand and requirements slowed down to the point where we just didn't need as much any more as we did in the initial phases.

ERM: In other words, then their product began to flow more into normal civilian markets?

WRB: As fast as they could re-establish transportation means, but that took quiet some time. All the canals were dry; they rail lines were disrupted; locomotives had been destroyed. The rail lines just weren't functioning. In fact, no transportation lines were functioning. They only means of moving material was with our trucks in the initial phases. Slowly they got some rail lines back in and began to operate, but that took a while. We rehabilitated a lot of the transportation as we need it for the pursuit of the War but that was as far as we went. The rest of it had to come later, and I had gone before that occurred.

ERM: And the local market itself wasn't large enough to make any real dent I suppose?

WRB: Very little. I might mention this, that the Mediterranean Theater did import quite a lot of lumber from the U.S. in the early phases of their operations and it arrived in southern France—Marseilles. They had about four million feet of very high grade lumber delivered at the port and a forestry company was assigned to stack it and put it in shape so it wouldn't go bad, but I don't believe a stick of that lumber ever moved out of Marseilles. I don't think the American forces used one piece of it. I believe it was left and

given to the French—just to show the poor use we made of our own lumber. We just left it piled up down there.

ERM: When did you finish up your military work in Europe and come back to this country?

WRB: I finished my overseas assignment in ’47 and came back to Washington and explored as to where I would go after that, whether I’d get out of the service or remain in and where I would be. There was also the question of what branch of the service I would remain in. At the time I could choose between the Army and the Air Force. I found this operation carried on by the Corps of Engineers of procuring lumber going on as a single service function of the Corps of Engineers to supply all the wood products used by all the armed services. They either bought or made it; that’s their function in the armed services today. It was originally called the Army Navy Lumber Agency. The services got together and decided that they’d operate one office in the procurement of wood products.

ERM: When was that decided?

WRB: Early in the War. It was operated as the Army and Navy Lumber Agency and functioned from the beginning as one office.

ERM: Has it been maintained?

WRB: After the War—I believe about ’48 or ’49—the Navy by agreement decided to permit the Army to do all the purchasing. It was one of those inter-service agreements where on service would supply certain items and another service would supply another. For example, the Army also got procurement of all food for the services as one of their jobs. The Army got the procurement of wood products. Other services by agreement got other things that they handled for all services in the Department of Defense, including the Atomic Energy Commission. It was a means of cutting out duplication. I found this going on in ’47 when I returned. The Corps of Engineers had a forestry organization set up to procure lumber from military lands—anywhere they could find it on military-owned lands. That was brought on by the fact that, after cassation of controls and priorities that the armed services could place for wood products, there was such a pent up demand from regular market sources that suppliers just would not sell to the services at the controlled prices that still prevailed for government procurement. Therefore, the services couldn’t get any materials and they feared a great shortage would develop. An employee had seen these forest stands on military reservations and put in the suggestion that the services cut their own lumber from military lands.

ERM: Do you know who that person was?

WRB: His name was Salve. He was an employee of the South Atlantic Division of Engineers, and he got the highest award for an employee’s suggestion that was ever

given at the time. I'm not sure the amount he did end up with, but it was up to two or three thousand dollars.

ERM: He was a civilian employee of the Corps of Engineers?

WRB: Right. That's the South Atlantic Division Engineers, Atlanta.

ERM: And that came about in 1947 or '48?

WRB: 1946 or '47. And a system was evolved this way that the standing trees in forests on military reservations were made available for that purpose, and contracts were given to private operators to move in, cut the trees, saw the lumber and ship it on the orders flowing in from all sources. A revolving fund was set up to finance the thing, the contractors being paid from the fund and any unit receiving it would reimburse the fund so that it would be continued.

ERM: In other words, if a military installation out in Arizona needed so many board feet of lumber for a project, they would make a requisition and include a fund citation to cover the established costs?

WRB: There was an office, as I mentioned at first—the Army Navy Lumber Agency—set up which would receive all orders from all branches of the service and it would procure the items. The Air Force was then part of the Army. The orders came to that agency which was responsible for procurement from some source, then that office would screen the orders and try to procure the materials as near the point of consumption as possible. The production of military lands was just as though it was a purchase from some private mill owner or supplier. It was shipped as a regular requisition and a regular bill of lading, the only difference being that it was produced on military land. The unit reimbursed the office just as they would in any case. Through the accounting procedures the funds for paying the contractors became reimbursed. They would let a contract based on the size and the amount of production to come from a project, the project being the amount that some post decided they could release for that purpose by declaring it available. The district engineers operated the contacts for the Army Navy Lumber Agency that later simply became an Army function.

ERM: Now, where did principles of good forest management of these military forest lands begin to enter the picture?

WRB: At that time the Chief of Engineers established a forestry section under the direction of Colonel Chester Lee. He was on assignment to Chine and they flew him over here to take over the section and manage it. His responsibility was to get enough foresters into the organization and see that the cutting was performed in accordance with good practices. They performed as a staff to supervise the activity carried out at each post by the district engineers. The District Engineer personnel performed the mission of supervising the contract. Their personnel were instructed on how to carry out good forestry management in as far as it could be done in a short time. The main thing

was to get lumber, get lumber, get it as fast as possible but follow good practices was the order as well.

ERM: Where did you recruit your manpower?

WRB: They got local foresters; they hired some and got military foresters who were in service and brought them in. I was one of the military foresters who was brought back in after I changed from Air Force to Army. We had technical people who would perform cruising and determine the volume that would be available as a result of declarations of availability. The post generally had no people available for determining how much they had. They knew that they had timber but were not able to say how much. So people were sent out from the forestry section to perform that mission as a basis of the contracts. The District Engineers, by and large, had no technical people. They would only administrate a contract as such.

ERM: This program under Colonel Lee began about 1947? Where and on what post did the first contract logging and milling take place?

WRB: I believe it was Fort Bragg, North Carolina. That's my memory of the situation. That was the first they ever gave and one of the largest. From that they went on to any post, wherever there was a volume of timber available in sufficient quantity to permit a contract to give a reasonably economical operation.

ERM: And these contacts were let on competitive bids?

WRB: On competitive bids to the lowest bidder.

ERM: DID that result in the work being done in the main by small operators, medium-sized operators, or large operators?

WRB: They were small and medium. A contractor, to be a proper bidder, had to have production facilities, which included planer mills and equipment for breaking down a log into lumber, drying it, handling it, and putting it through the planer. He had to be a complete operator. He couldn't be so small that he didn't have all the production facilities. He might and often did subcontract the rough lumber production. That's the most common practice in lumber operations.

ERM: Did you find that certain operators went into this as a sort of fulltime business, in other words working on Army and military contracts almost exclusively?

WRB: No. We had new ones almost every time. It wasn't a matter of that he couldn't come back; someone else would come in and bid lower so we were changing contractors constantly. We did have some repeats.

ERM: Did you find many instances in whish the contract jobs didn't live up to specifications?

WRB: Very little of this. It wasn't serious; I would put it that way. You always find infractions. It's a matter of constant supervision and inspection in order to see that it is done right, which in the performance that was carried out by the district engineer in that case.

ERM: I'd like to introduce into the interview at this time Mr. Harold Barnett, who is a civilian forester employed by the Third Army. Hal, your experience began when?

BARNETT: I came on as assistant forester at Fort Stewart in 1952. I had prior service with the Florida Forest Service. At that time they were still in the process of really trying to get a forestry organization started at Stewart. Mr. Burley Lufburrow was already there as a forester and he'd been there nearly a year when I came in as assistant, helping him in fire protection and management.

WRB: Mr. Barnett's function came later, after this reorganization took place with a change in the regulations providing that each post would carry out a forestry administration as a regular part of their grounds maintenance activity. It was found out early that it should be one of those post functions rather than have a district engineer perform the forestry work. Under that arrangement each post would set up a forestry organization on the post to carry out every phase of the activity except the physical harvesting. Harvesting is the material that's surplus to the needs of the forest or the good forest management. They set up their individual post organizations beginning in 1950. It took them a matter of two or three years to get really organized with all the equipment and the improvements and the personnel required. They recruited technical foresters for that purpose to head their specific individual organizations. They were organized in a similar fashion to the U.S. Forest Service ranger district in ever way. They patterned it very closely to the Forest service.

ERM: What part did you have, Colonel, in this reorganization program?

WRB: My part was working under the Third Army Engineer having a responsibility for the Army commander as his representative to see that the work was done at all posts. The command supervision in the Army is just that. They inspect and supervise and instruct the lower echelons at the posts in how to perform and give them the technical assistance. Under that program I went to every post and outlined what would be a proper organization to get the job done. Very detailed specific plans were made providing for everything they would need, and we tried to arrive at a preliminary amount of cut that should be done in carrying out good practices. First of all, there was organized fire protection; then we had to get a consciousness around all the military units to have them help with fires and control the situation as much as they could. And this organization would supplement and help troop fire prevention programs and fight any fires with the proper equipment that was not in the hands of the troop unites. In other words, a military forestry unit on a port was similar in every way to a regular district administration of any kind. It was so patterned in the beginning and still is that way.

ERM: To what extent were you exercising this program with civilian employees? To what extent did you lean upon military personnel to execute the program?

WRB: You mean after we began in 1950?

ERM: Yes.

WRB: The military didn't come into it in any way except the overall supervision. The Army, as you know, has thousands of civilian employees that perform the regular missions of housekeeping. Instead of having to draft somebody to do it, you can hire somebody at half the cost or less, and he stays on the job and you have the benefit of continuity instead of having to train some new person in the service to do it all the time. There have been great savings as a result of this action.

ERM: I was thinking of your first major problem on the post which was one of fire prevention and control. When you ran into fire problems, how did you combat the fire?

WRB: Well, the forestry organization that we had set up took that job in hand immediately. When a fire occurred they'd go out and plow around it and the regular things that are done here in this section to stop fires. Military units might be handy and they would assist.

ERM: You could commandeer military personnel to assist?

WRB: In addition to those that were on the scene there might be other units called that were already set up for that purpose. There's always a unit available at all times for any emergency on the post. Every post has such an organization.

ERM: And that unit is especially trained in fire fighting?

WRB: No, they're available for any emergency.

ERM: Flood duty?

WRB: Anything that comes up. They're available 24 hours a day. They rotate that duty among the different units.

ERM: But you don't have a continuing group of military personnel with any continuity of experience in fighting fires?

WRB: We never have had and probably won't ever have because of transfer, turnover. There's no purpose of bringing a man into the service to do that kind of work. He's brought into it to be a fighting man, a soldier trained to go somewhere and do something else. If he isn't needed for that purpose, there's no use keeping him around. There's no use bringing people in, either through recruiting or drafting, if they're not going to be

trained to fight in some unit or do something specifically in the military action. This is a housekeeping matter. One interesting phase that ought to be brought into this thing is the fact that military forestry operations has a very old history. Some of the reservations were established as a military national forest when the land was acquired. By agreement between the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of Agriculture they were called military national forests and we had a national forest administration present on the ground to perform the mission.

ERM: When did that start?

WRB: That began around 1918. I don't know how many posts altogether went under that arrangement but I know of three in the Third Army. The local U.S. Forest Service carried it out as a regular mission of their national forest administration. They assigned forest rangers, forest supervisors to that job just as though they were regular national forests.

ERM: They evidently recruited a good many men from the Forest Service itself probably to establish that organization.

WRB: That's right. They recruited and transferred from their organization into that job and they set them on these military posts to perform that mission. They soon found out, just as you would in any case, that with two housekeepers present you'd have trouble. One's interest did not jibe with the interest another one. The military thought that they should be training troops without any interference from the foresters, and the foresters thought that they ought to be able to carry on forestry work without any interference from the military so they came to a situation where something had to be done. The Forest Service decided that it would be the proper thing for the military to do all the work themselves so they asked to be relieved of that responsibility and advised that the Army should do its own work after they pulled out. Well, some of the posts did set up organizations at the beginning and carried on well as a post function, but the higher commands were not supervising it so the work slowly dwindled and died out except they did carry out some fire protection but it wasn't very well organized. Tremendous losses occurred and a great waste from the fact that there wasn't a proper organization to handle fires, depending largely on military units, untrained, unskilled and improperly equipped. Consequently, the fires would get out of hand and they weren't able to cope with them. They didn't have in most cases too good a fire history for a long period of years. If you don't have the proper organization or equipment and materials, you just aren't going to get a job done. But in '50, when we began this concerted drive, we did set up our plans to provide everything that would be needed to do the job on each post. All this work must be coordinated with the training activities. It must be coordinated day to day and hour to hour in every way in a manner not to interfere with but to aid and abet the training activities in proper maintenance of the grounds. In so doing we could still carry on a very close to normal forestry operation after we understood how it could be done. Now, there's a lot of slips and a lot of things go wrong due to so many people on the posts. There's no pieces of land I know of so heavily occupied as a military post, so many people moving around doing so many different things. Fort Benning has

thousands of training problems to be carried out in every section of the post, but it's a matter of coordinating the forestry work with these problems and with those activities, which is what the post forester and his organization carries out. Mr. Barnett has had experience in that for several years no. He understand how necessary that coordination is in order to perform anything. It means shifting your daily operations so you won't be interfered with by the training activities, so that you can still work in another sector that isn't being used at the time. You very often have to move within a day, don't you?

BARNETT: That's right. You have to keep very close check on the training program in order to get in certain areas and perform certain duties. A lot of times it's a matter of more or less educating the military as to what the problems in your work consist of. They in turn are able to help you and they'll say, "Well, we'll move over here and you can have this area for a week or two," and it's a constant checking and working with them to see when you can get into a certain area. For instance, problems come up, they know they're going to use an area next month, and there are certain requirements – maybe fire protection, fire breaks that have to be put in—and now they are getting around to coordinating that with the forestry section, and the post training sections will say, "Well, we're going to need this area next month. We're going to be firing training problems or fire producing training aids and will you help us?" Because they have found it's much easier and quicker and simpler all the way around to take a little precaution beforehand than to go in there and then have a fire start where they many have elaborate facilities in the field – radar installations or anything that requires a lot of movement – and they have found that it is much safer to let you get in there to help them with preparations than have a fire get loose and then they start running around and trying to get this heavy equipment out of the way. You've got troops scattered all over the field and there's always a chance of someone getting hurt or trapped in a wild fire. And it's through this more or less working closely with them that we've found we've been able to do a lot better job in our management program.

ERM: Don't you have a rather abnormal fire problem on a military post then with all this firing and simulated battle devices, firecrackers and simulated shell bursts and all that sort of thing that you wouldn't have in a normal forestry operation?

BARNETT: Yes, we have a considerable amount of that, and one way we try to handle it is to get ahead of the use of these areas, perhaps in control burning it, in keeping the vegetation down to a point where if they have fires they aren't so severe. On a concentrated program of training like that sometimes you don't have time to prepare an area. Consequently, they'll go in there and a fire will get started. Well, they have to cease all their operations in order to get the fire out, especially if they are conducting a maneuver type of thing. On firing ranges where we know there's going to be fire, know the kind of weapons to be fired, we set up our program to control burn and within our fire breaks and lines to contain the fires within a specified area. Then if they get a fire in there we don't have to worry about it unless extreme weather conditions make it necessary for us to go in and put it out to keep it from getting out of the area. But we have a considerable problem in coordinating our activities with the training activities and

so far we've been able to cut down a lot of our fire losses by working with them and knowing what they're going to be doing next and just getting in ahead of them.

Our post foresters have to pretty good training officers to understand these matters, which they gain by experience. In fact, our post foresters, I'd say, know more about what's going on on the post that anybody else. They have to know.

ERM: From my own military experience I know a little something of the attitude of military personnel toward civilian employees. Don't you run into difficulties at that point where civilian employees, especially in a field like forestry have some difficulty in forcing their wishes and carrying out of procedure, we'll say, in the fighting of a fire with military personnel?

BARNETT: Perhaps we had more problems when we first started than we do now because the Army has developed an educational program in fire prevention, protection and conservation of natural resources in which military people are given an idea of the value of our natural resources and how to go about protecting them, and through this educational program on their part make them realize the consequences of serious fires, and we're able to work a little more closely with them. They're beginning to understand why we need to get in there and put fires out, and why we need to do certain things in an area.

ERM: Is that educational job a function of the post forester or his staff or is that carried out by military personnel?

BARNETT: On my installation at Fort Gordon I got with the G-3 which is responsible for training officers and I helped them to write a training plan and a master lesson plan on this fire prevention, protection and conservation of natural resources, and they have set it up in their program that the military will be given that lesson periodically. By my getting up the information and presenting it to them, that relieves me from being on a continuous daily teaching basis due to the personnel turnover. In that way we have worked out a master plan and we have given it to the military. Maybe it will last an hour – 50 minutes or something like that – and if he needs additional information and fill-ins, the lists include my name and my phone number and he can call me and ask, "Why this?" or "Why that? And then we can help him. But most of it is taken over by the military with more or less a technical supervision from the forester and keeping them supplied with the pertinent information that they need.

ERM: Is that SOP with all units, Colonel?

WRB: That's a directive from the Continental Army Commander that it will be done. This is in the form of a training memorandum providing that every person entering the Army will be given a minimum of training in the prevention of destruction of natural resources and fire prevention matters as a regular troop training activity.

ERM: What is the date of that directive?

WRB: It's been in effect now for about two years.

ERM: And you're finding now with that you're getting a higher degree of efficiency?

BARNETT: I believe so. Some installations haven't gone into it too much and with others it's been very effective. We find that our fire losses are being cut considerably and we believe that part of it is due to what we call an educational program on the post.

WRB: We endeavor to create a consciousness of those matters. We can't train the troops to learn how to be a forester or what he should do, but we can create a consciousness of the problem and what it involves, and we try to get over to the individual trooper what he should do if he discovers a fire so that he has an understanding of the overall picture. He understands, for example, that he couldn't be expected to go out there and fight that big fire and stop it, but if he sees it he can report it and take some action and whatever he can do, and we try to get them all to do just that. The individual troop unit commanders take the action of commanding their troops to move in and start work, and over and over again they take all the action that is needed. He also instructs them in proper care with fire, with all things they have to use that would cause fire. The warming fires on maneuvers – he tells them to dig a hole and put the fire in that hole and then bury it when they leave so that it can't escape.

ERM: All right. Now, I know that the primary objective of military training is to train troops for military service. Therefore, the post's first purpose is that. But let's say that you run into a situation where they want to lay out a new firing range or something. What influence does the forester have on that decision, if any? Is there any opportunity for his pattern and plan of forest management to be taken into account in determining things of that kind, or does his plan have to conform to whatever requests are made?

WRB: He has to fit into the training plan. He has to dovetail his operations in with the overall training needs. That comes first as the primary mission. However, there have been a lot of ways whereby we could move the problem to another area that would cause less destruction, and that is done as far as possible. He could also point out as a forester with knowledge of terrain that perhaps the problem could be better carried out in another place where it would cause less destruction.

ERM: Is there any recourse the local forester can take beyond his own post? Can he appeal to you, for example, at Third Army Headquarters for intervention in a situation of that kind?

WRB: He doesn't appeal. That's the wrong term to use. The proposal is submitted to the Army for consideration. In the Army Headquarters we have training officers who are responsible for all the training that is carried on on the posts and they then pass on and determine whether or not some proposal is actually needed or advised to be done, and we look to them for that part of the decision as to whether or not it should be approved. Very often they will not approve. I've seen it happen over and over again that they will

not approve certain actions and will send them back for reconsideration, pointing out where changes should be made and what should be done in respect to all the considerations involved. And we trim it down, realign, change a location in accordance with the needs of the problem, first of all, and then conservation is brought into the picture as well. For example, recently a post proposed to clear a very large area. They just said, "We need to clear it for the training department." That's all they said. Well, our training section examined it and decided they didn't need it, and trimmed it down to what was needed, and sent it back with instructions to resubmit. And they do that very frequently. In our section, Army Headquarters, the engineer works very closely with the G-3 section, similar to the post action between the post forester and the training section. Of course, that's as high as that liaison goes.