

Fred Meades Evans

Oral History
Project

Transcripts by:

Victoria Arsky

Nancy Hult



Interview with Fred Evans (F. E.)

featuring Ray Jones (R. J.)

October 16th, 2016

Part 1 – Military Experience

R.J. – Good morning, I'm Ray Jones here at Altrusa House to interview Frederick Meade Evans as a part of the Oral History Program of Veterans who come as clients at Altrusa House in Gainesville, FL. It is October 16th and the time is approximately 9:50. I'm a volunteer for this project, and a former member of the board, now emeritus, we have another person who is doing the videography work for the interview, Nancy Hult, who is Vice President of Altrusa House Board. We are delighted to have Frederick Meade Evans with me today. Would you let me call you Fred instead of Frederick?

F.E. – Yes.

R.J. – **Can you give me the date of your birth?**

F.E. – I was born on the 21st of November 1950.

R.J. – **And what branch of service were you in?**

F.E. – I was detailed Infantry for one year, then on to my Basic Branch Chemical Corps.

R.J. – **Right. Did you have a particular number or status? Is Chemical Corps sufficient enough to identify your sector?**

F.E. – That should be sufficient. The number identifying the Chemical Corps is 74 Alpha 74A.

R.J. – **What was your rank in the military?**

F.E. – I was all the way from Second Lieutenant to Lieutenant Colonel. Retired as a Lieutenant Colonel.

R.J. – **Where did you served during your career?**

F.E. – I served in multiple places in the United States, in Grafenwoehr, Germany, in Panama, and in Kuwait.

R.J. – **What type of work did you perform in this service?**

F.E. – Predominantly, training friendly soldiers to defend against chemical and biological warfare, and planning to, if necessary, employ nuclear weapons against armed forces.

R.J. – **So you were trained in both nuclear and chemical?**

F.E. – Yes. Nuclear, chemical, and defense against biological weapons

R.J. – **So this placed you in a very unique position in the army and the United States at the time?**

F.E. – There is a small group of officers who had the same training and assignments.

R.J. – **What wars did you serve in?**

F.E. – [*Thinking*] The Gulf War in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. And Panama, a military action.

R.J. – **So when you say “Gulf” you mean the Kuwait invasion, right?**

F.E. – That's correct. And, with the 82nd Airborne Division, we parachuted into Panama when the Panama Canal was taken over.

R.J. – Were you a chemical officer then?

F.E. – I was the Chemical Officer for the 82nd Airborne Division at the time.

R.J. – What sort of bacterial or other type of chemical warfare did you expect at that time?

F.E. – We were concerned that the Panamanians may have acquired some chemicals from WWII remaining stockpiles: blister agent and some potential nerve agent.

R.J. – And the general public probably wasn't aware of that, were they?

F.E. – No.

R.J. – It was quite secretive. Fred, you did enlist, did you not?

F.E. – No, I was directly commissioned Second Lieutenant. From Reserve Officer Training Corps at Ohio State University.

R.J. – All right, and where did you used to live at the time you were directly commissioned?

F.E. – I was a Reserve Officer Training Course at Ohio State University and I lived in Springfield, OH.

R.J. – Why did you join the military service?

F.E. – I felt that I would better serve my country as a Commissioned Officer in the Army than any other position.

R.J. – Well said, well said. Why did you picked the particular service that you joined?

F.E. – Well, I thought about the air force in opposition to the Navy, but my basic experience led me to believe I would be of more help in the army and, specifically, in the Chemical Corps.

R.J. – Did your training in Ohio help you decide that?

F.E. – Yes, as well as my time at ROTC Summer Camp at Ft. Indiantown Gap Military Reservation in Pennsylvania.

R.J. – When did you decide, for certain, that you would be commissioned in the chemical field?

F.E. – Summer of 1973, when I went to ROTC Summer Camp.

R.J. – Was there any particular situation or experience, at that time that caused you to stay in the Chemical Corps?

F.E. – None in particular as an initial situation, but as I looked back to historical examples of Chemical Corps activities, I thought that it was the best place for me to serve.

R.J. – Do you recall any of your days of service?

F.E. – I was in the Regular Army Detailed Infantry for my first year, my first days in service I was a Heavy Mortar Platoon leader for the second battalion, 50th infantry at Ft. Hood, Texas.

R.J. – Did you have a particular group of soldiers that you were responsible for?

F.E. – Yes, absolutely! I had 38 soldiers in my platoon and I was responsible not only their physical training (their ability to do push-ups, sit ups and sprints), but also their army training to fire the 4.2 inch mortar and hit targets up to 3 miles away. They taught me as much as I taught them. It was not difficult for me to teach; it was more difficult for me to accept that they knew more than I did at that time. Therefore, I had to learn to listen, take care of, lead and discipline them when necessary.

R.J. – So, from the beginning, they were your learning sponsors of leadership almost immediately then?

F.E. – Yes, Sir, I learned as much from my soldiers as I did from my superior Officers.

R.J. – Did you have any special training or boot camp you wanted to share with us?

F.E. – During our ROTC Summer Camp, I became a heat casualty of temperature and humidity. The temperature was 102°F degrees outside with very high humidity and we were doing a lot of physical activity that I ended up passing out. I had to stay in recuperation for about 10 days.

R.J. – That was a shock and a blow, wasn't it?

F.E. – Absolutely.

R.J. – But it didn't really affect your later career or anything of that sort?

F.E. – No, it didn't.

R.J. – But it could be very dangerous, couldn't it?

F.E. – It certainly opened my eyes to the possibility of having something wrong with me.

R.J. – Do you remember any of your instructors who were in charge of you at the time?

F.E. – It's hard to say yes for that very early period, my company commander... the commander's name when I was detailed infantry was Francis Paris and my leading officer when I came out of army detail to the Chemical Corps was J. Harold Mashburn, Lt. Colonel in the Chemical Corps.

R.J. – Did you find it difficult getting through the first aspects of training as an officer?

F.E. – The most difficult portion, for me, was leadership training. When we were divided into infantry/officer basic, we were divided into 8-man groups, and we took turns every day, blending in with the 8-man group. That was difficult. I was trying to be an equal, although you can't be both: an equal and a leader at the same time.

R.J. – I can see the conflict that you must have had. But you managed to get through that, right?

F.E. – Absolutely.

R.J. – How long did that period last?

F.E. – Well, infantry basic lasted 6 weeks and then Parachute School was 3 weeks after that.

R.J. – Did you immediately decide that you wanted to be airborne?

F.E. – Absolutely.

R.J. – Would you tell us why you selected airborne? It is a very demanding service...

F.E. – It was demanding and rewarding as well. When I followed through the training and exited the aircraft, counted to four, looked up to check on my parachute and enjoyed the ride down.

R.J. – So you have no great aspect of fear from your training, you just enjoy the experience?

F.E. – There was one time when I had to employ my reserve parachute because I have a catastrophic failure with my main parachute. That was not enjoyable. But that didn't keep me from doing anything, be it with the airborne or the army. It just taught me to be more aware than simply enjoying the ride.

R.J. – Approximately, how many jumps did you make and did you continue making jumps throughout your airborne career?

F.E. – Well, I had about 80 parachute jumps. I made 5 in Parachute School and 75 in the 82nd Airborne.

R.J. – Did you find that the men who jumped, like yourself, be it an officer or an enlisted, were a different type of soldier?



F.E. – Absolutely, all of the volunteers in Parachute School and the 82nd Airborne were in better shape, trained to a higher physical standard than the regular army.

R.J. – Very good. Fred, would you tell us about the wars or the combat areas that you did serve? Tell us in as much detail as you can share.

F.E. – Well...

R.J. – Oh, but perhaps, before that, could you say something about what training you would describe as airborne training? What about your training as a chemical officer? That must have been intense because you've mentioned biological, nuclear, chemical, etc.... you had to learn tremendously about each of these areas, did you not?

F.E. – Yes.

R.J. – Could you tell us about how you were trained and what sort of education the army gave you in these areas?

F.E. – The Army gave me physical, intellectual

and psychological training in order to deal with the stress that chemical warfare induces on individuals. When you are sitting up and have a protective mask on your face and a protective suit encapsulates your body for hours at a time, it becomes very stressful.

R.J. – They taught you how to counteract the stress?

F.E. – Yes.

R.J. – Did you find learning in this particular area a fascinating thing?

F.E. – I knew it was necessary. It was something that kept my attention all the time.

R.J. – Very cool. Would you please describe the combat experiences/areas that you were present in?

F.E. – Well, when we jumped into Panama, I did not see direct combat there. I was then stationed with the XVIII Airborne Corps within in Kuwait, when the Iraqis invaded. We had to go on a tremendous offensive along with the entire force,

when we eliminated the threat.

R.J. – What did you find of Kuwait? Was it highly developed, was it somewhat developed as a country?

F.E. – It was small towns separated by large distances of hot, desert sand. Road networks were minimal at best, two lanes, and it took a lot of preparation with intense management to transport troops, equipment and supplies.

R.J. – Were you the commander of a specific group that you had to take care of, in order words, did you have your own particular chemical group?

F.E. – Not in Kuwait. I activated and commanded the 83rd Chemical Battalion stationed at Fort Bragg, NC. I was commander of the 44th Chemical Company, 2nd Armored Division at Fort Hood, TX, early in my career.

R.J. – But when you were in Kuwait, was there a special group that you were responsible for at the time?

F.E. – I was responsible for 250 US army soldiers who were being tasked with ensuring that Kuwaiti forces did their duties and followed through on their assignments.

R.J. – And were you involved at all with dealing with great fires? I believe the Iraqi set fire to many of the oil wells. Did you have to deal with that particular chemical aspect?

F.E. – Well, you see, I had 6 explosive ordinance detachments that were assigned to me and they had to extinguish the oil well fires.

R.J. – This required a tremendous amount of expertise, didn't it?

F.E. – Not only from previous training, but also on scene immediately.

R.J. – And it was very dangerous?

F.E. – Yes, we had eleven soldiers injured.

R.J. – Fred, you were certainly in the thick of a very, very difficult and complex part of combat. Now, is there anything you want to tell us about Panamanian combat area?

F.E. – I just jumped in with the headquarters that was after two combat brigades had already jumped in and engaged in combat, so we were literally just dealing with the aftermath of what little resistance there was. It was very successful for US forces.

R.J. – You were in the Middle East, so there were considerable problems there. Countries surrounded you in difficulty or trying to create conflict amongst them. What was your impression of the Middle East as a potential threat for the United States?

F.E. – So long as they didn't have any ability to develop nuclear or biological weapons, I knew their threat to the United States would be minimal. If, say, they developed intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons, then there would be a very real threat.

R.J. – Were you in a number of Middle East countries?

F.E. – Yes, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Lebanon.

R.J. – So you have a background history of not only engaging on a chemical warfare, but also being in the Middle East. You were never a war prisoner, were you?

F.E. – No, Sir.

R.J. – I'm sure you earned a number of medals and citations. Do you want to tell us about them?

F.E. – Yes, I earned a Bronze Star for Action in Combat, as well as Meritorious Service medal, Legion of Merit, the Army Commendation Medal when I retired. Humanitarian Service Medal and a number of others that came along with

each assignment that I had.

R.J. – Well, let's see... did you have any injuries other than the training ones mentioned any injuries during your combat experiences?

F.E. – I was not wounded or hit with any exploding ammunition. I did suffer a 60% loss of hearing in my left ear for my work with countering explosives and I still have to walk with a cane because of a dislocated knee in my left leg as a result of a parachute jump. There were no major debilitating injuries at all.

R.J. – Well, we completed the basics about your combat and service experiences. Is there anything you would like to add before we move on to talk about your relationships and family during your services?

F.E. – [*Thinking*]

R.J. – I know you indicated that you felt that being in service as an officer gave you an opportunity to serve your country in the best possible way. I'm sure you've felt that and even more after you've finished your career.

F.E. – Yes. I'm very grateful for escaping any kind of major injury or debilitation. Very grateful!

R.J. - Very good! All right, let's move on.



Part 2 – Relationships and Family

R.J. – Could you tell us how did you stay in touch with your family?

F.E. – Mainly by writing them letters. The US mail was very important to us. Also, we were able to place long distance phone calls periodically.

R.J. – Did it operate efficiently?

F.E. – Absolutely, we were delivered food and drinks no matter where we were. It was delivered, at least, 3 times a week.

R.J. – During your time in service, was the food good? What was it like?

F.E. – With the exception of combat rations, the food was excellent. It was prepared daily and was a balanced diet.

R.J. – Well, did you have plenty of supplies and resources to meet the responsibilities you had?

F.E. – Yes.

R.J. – And you had mentioned, in the beginning, the pressure and stress that you felt as a young officer in these fields, you must have had considerable stress and pressure in many of the areas that you served in as chemical officer.

F.E. – Sir, it was a demanding time both physically and mentally.

R.J. – Do you think that the army prepared you psychologically to prepare for this stress?

F.E. – Yes, and no. The army prepared me very well for my time in the infantry. The Chemical Corps was being reestablished and did not have a strong sense of leadership initially until General Watson took command. But ultimately, the chemical Corps proved its worth.

R.J.- Fred, before we begin to talk about your family and other relationships you had during your military service, would you tell us about any discovery of chemical weapons that was made during the Kuwaiti combat or other military operations? I have the feeling that some of them you can openly speak about and others not.

F.E.- Well, we found multiple sites (a total of six) with open storage areas where weaponized chemical agents were in artillery shells, stored out in the open. We had to go in and demilitarize, blow them up.

R.J. – Would you tell us how many years you've served the military?

F.E. – I was in the army for 22 years, being assigned to the Chemical Corps for 21 of those 22 years.

R.J. – Did you do anything special to give you good luck while you were in some of the combat areas?

F.E. – My mother had given me a 50-cent piece and I carried that with me during all combat operations.

R.J. – All right. What about entertainment? Were there American entertainers who came to places like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia to keep the troops entertained?

F.E. – Yes, but it was only on special occasions. We didn't have entertainment on a daily or weekly basis. So, when entertainers came over, they came in mass (five or six of them) and put on shows over a 3- or 4-day period.

R.J. – What did you do when you went on leave?

F.E. – It depended on where I was and when leave occurred. I love to go fishing and had a bass fishing boat that I bought in Texas. We'd go bass and crappie fishing. I was a long distance runner in college so I went on 2 to 6 mile runs when I was on leave. I also tried to get out and see the local sites, towns, activities that were happening in the local area.

R.J. – Did you make any special travels while you were in service?

F.E. – I was given an Isuzu Trooper to go forward to see the elements that were reported to my command. So, I made 60 or 80 mile trips once or twice a week.

R.J. – Do you have some photographs of your service period?

F.E. – Yes, there are maybe 40 or 50 total.

R.J. – What did you think of your fellow officers and soldiers?

F.E. – It just depends on the time. In the 70s, guys were getting commissioned to avoid the draft and they lacked the sense of dedication that I had. Later on, the 80s and 90s, we had a much more professional and dedicated Officer Corps.

R.J. – Fred, after your service, can you recall the day your service ended?

F.E. – I was on leave and I was required to go to a local reserve component clearing station to get my paperwork done and my photograph taken for retirement purposes.

R.J. – Where were you when you left the service?

F.E. – Fort McClellan, Alabama.

R.J. – When you finished your army career, did you go back to school or came back to work? What did you do?

F.E. – A little bit of both. I started an advanced degree and had to give it up to get back to work, start earning more money in order to pay for a house I'd just bought.

R.J. – Did you make close friendships while you were in service and did they endure?

F.E. – I've made friendships that were not necessarily close, but they were effective at the time. Did they endure? Only for a matter of 2 or 3 months after I retired.

R.J. – What type of work did you pursue after you retired?

F.E. – Consulting work, my undergraduate degree was in parks and recreation administration, I've held 2 positions in an area that was covered by a lake and we had to rent boats to let guys go fishing. We had activities during holidays when we would bring in local groups and children's homes to sponsor and have cookouts.

R.J. – How many years did you work and when did you retire?

F.E. – I worked for 4 years and finally retired in 2006.

R.J. – Very good. Well, Frederick Meade Evans, thank you for giving us your time.

Part 3 – Continuation

R.J. – Continuing interview of Frederick Meade Evans.

R.J. – **Fred, You received a number of medals and commendations. We would like you to comment on and tell us anything you would like to have as a part of the record? We have pictures of a number of medals. Could you comment on them?**

F.E. – The one, on the right hand side, is the Bronze Star. I received that for armed service in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Those green and white ones are Army Commendation Medals I received a total of five of those during my military career. The red ribbon with white stripes is the Meritorious Service Medal – I received a total of four of those during my military career.

R.J. – **Could you tell us why or what achievement you did to receive these commendation medals?**

F.E. – I had to develop successful training programs, demonstrate leadership for all subordinate personnel in the unit. For other medals shown, I had to demonstrate the abilities to speak publicly, write effectively, coordinate internally and externally, have the ability to pass demanding physical tests, and operate as a leader and coordinator.

R.J. – I gather from our previous interviews, that you had great expertise in training. That was considered a major part of your leadership. Very Interesting! **Here is another medal, would you tell us about that?**

F.E. – That is the Meritorious Service Medal. The Meritorious Service Medal is awarded at a point in your military career when you have exceeded expectations.

R.J. – It is a reward of performance and rank, so to speak. We have a very distinguished picture of you and all the service ribbons that you have on plus

your airborne. A very fine military picture!

R.J. – **Can you tell us when this was taken?**

F.E. – That picture, I believe, was taken in 1994.

R.J. – **Do you remember where you were?**

F.E. – I think at that period, I was back at Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

R.J. – You received commendation medals but you also received many commendation letters. Here is one commendation letter for when you received the Meritorious Service Medal.

F.E. – [*Looking at letter*] OK.
This is not necessarily a medal.

“Congratulations, on your admission to attend Command and General Staff College during the Academic term 87/88. Your admission is the result of your previous leadership potential, dedication and commitment to serious achievement.

I am sure you will continue to dedicate yourself to the order of separating your already proven abilities for the benefit of the Chemical Corp and the United States Army.

Again, congratulations and best of luck!”

R.J. – You were in a key position at this time. In the Army, you don't use the word educator. You use training. **You were basically an educator were you not?**

F.E. – An educator and an operator, both go hand in hand together.

R.J. – Here are two other can you see. We are just interested in where you learn about you from the commendation.

F.E. – This one says:

“Dear Major Evans:

Congratulations, on your selection for attendance to the Command and General Staff College. Your selection is evidence that the Army places a high value o your potential.

I am confident that you will take full advantage of this opportunity for professional growth.

You have my best wishes for continued success.

*Sincerely,
Peter D. Hidalgo
Brigadier General, US Army”*

R.J. – How can you live with yourself with all these compliments? [*Laughing*]

F.E. – Well these were just some pictures that were taken.

R.J. – **Is there a Phi Beta Kappa for your organization?**

F.E. – Well, not necessarily a Phi Beta Kappa, but the top 10% was often looked at in the same manner.

R.J. – You were there!

F.E. – Yes, in both peace and war, I always strove to do my best.

R.J. – Well, thank you. This gives us insight into a number of different aspects of your career.

R.J. – If we can go on to a very interesting social science topic, the role of women in the service! The integration of women into the service! First of all you were there at the time when this almost monumental change occurred. **Did you have any women in your command?**

F.E. – Yes, not all an all woman units that I commanded, but I had females in most of the units I did command.

R.J. – **What sort of responsibilities at that time did they have in your organization?**

F.E. – Their duties were training for use of Intelligence and coordination of activities. They also held leadership roles.

R.J. – **Was it difficult to integrate them within your organization? Meaning did you find some resistance to their integration and work that they did?**

F.E. – It is hard to say yes or no. At the early portion of my career it was difficult to get them integrated into our daily unit activities. But, later on in the 80’s and 90’s they were more easily accepted and were more readily taken into operations.

R.J. – **Was it difficulty at first because of acceptance? Or, was it because they had much to learn?**

F.E. – No, the difficulty at first was there was a federal prohibition against taking women into combat and exposing them to hostile fire. That was lifted in 1986 and changed by Congress to allow both sexes to participate in combat operations. So, it became much easier to integrate women into my activities when Congress allowed women to serve in combat positions.

R.J. – **You always had to think of combat. Didn’t you?**

F.E. – Absolutely! It is the entire reason you are there to always be prepared and anticipate the unexpected.

R.J. – **Did you ultimately work with women of equal rank?**

F.E. – Absolutely! Captains, Majors, Lt. Colonels, and Colonels.

R.J. – **And that worked out well?**

F.E. – Yes, it did. When they knew what was expected and what their personal limitations were.

R.J. – Were there any combat experiences with women?

F.E. – I do not have personal experience with women in combat. But, I do have experience with women operating within units in which I served when I was sent to combat but no women worked directly for me in combat.

R.J. – Were they successful?

F.E. – Yes, for the majority of them.

R.J. – In these situations close to combat and now combat, do you think this has changed the Army in anyway? As far as training, working conditions?

F.E. – It has changed the way the Army operates. The way the Army chooses and selects individuals for advancement in rank. It became easier to work with supporting organizations to get information, to get needed supplies, to get training materials for these women in our units.

R.J. – You found the women especially gifted in working in training situations?

F.E. – Well, just as with men, some were better at training situations than others.

R.J. – Would that be true throughout the Army?

F.E. – It is true throughout my experience. It is not necessarily true throughout all units in the Army. Some combat arms units particularly (that's infantry, armor, and field artillery) are still difficult organizations to have support women in those units.

R.J. – Is there anything you would like to add about women in the services?

F.E. – Women are moving forward in selection in rank and duty positions now. In the past they had not done so. Now we have two women chief of the Chemical Corps where as in the past that was impossible.

R.J. – A revolution almost! Well, Frederick Meade Evans, thank you for a most interesting addition to your interview of your service. You have had an amazing career. We all appreciate. Thank you again!

F.E. – Thank you.



Interview with Fred Evans (F. E.)

featuring Ray Jones (R. J.)

December 2nd, 2016

R.J. – Good afternoon. I'm Ray Jones and I'm participating in the veterans' oral history program for the veterans who come to Altrusa House, the adult daycare center. It is approximately 1:20 time. I will be interviewing Mr. Frederick Meade Evans who was formerly a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Army. He is our first interviewee for the program in this oral history. We have also doing a video recording Nancy Hult who is on the board of Altrusa House and I am on the board, I was on the board but I am now a board emeritus and, for the record, Frederick Evans' wife, Bonnie, is also a member of the Altrusa board.

R.J. – And, uh, Fred, here are some basic questions and we'll get into your basic experience in the service. Uh, **you, of course, enlisted in the service?**

F.E. – No. I was commissioned; I was a commissioned officer.

R.J. – Thank you for correcting that. And so on. **Why did you have a commission? I mean, did you plan to have a career and you knew immediately that you should have a career in the service?**

F.E. – Not necessarily “knew immediately.” But I attended ROTC—Reserve Officer Training Corps—at Ohio State University, where I have a Bachelor's degree, and I was commissioned regular army as a result of ROTC.

R.J. – Fine. **Did you pick the service branch that you wanted? Did you pick the army?**

F.E. – The branch that I went to in Reserve Officer Training Corps was army branch.

R.J. – Right. Do you recall your first days as a commissioned officer?

F.E. – Uh, huh.

R.J. – What were they like?

F.E. – Challenging. I was, after going to infantry officer basic, I was assigned to Fort Hood, Texas, and I was a 4.2-inch mortar platoon leader for the Second Battalion Fiftieth Infantry. And, we had, I had 23 soldiers working for me, six of which were given the choice of joining the army or go to jail.

R.J. – I went into the army at the same time this was happening. In other words they gave the men a choice of going to jail or joining the army. Two-thirds of my basic training unit had been given that choice.

F.E. – Oh my.

R.J. – So that was a tremendous responsibility. Were you trained in this area by an instruction group to handle these men?

F.E. – Not necessarily an instruction group. There was a two-week period at infantry basic where we were given instruction on how to handle those people who were given a choice of army or jail. And that was basically about it.

R.J. – I see. How did you get through it all? It was a challenge.

F.E. – It was ... Yeah, it was a challenge, it was something I needed to learn on the go as I was going through it.

R.J. – Well, your experiences as a commissioned officer in the army ... you indicated prior to this interview that you were a chemical and nuclear officer.

F.E. – Correct.

R.J. – Did you major in chemistry or science at Ohio State?

F.E. – I majored in parks and recreation administration and the only thing that got me Chemical Corps was a referral from my Reserve Officer Training commander at Ohio State, who said, I think you will be best at Chemical Corps.

R.J. – And that was a good decision?

F.E. – It was.

R.J. – **Wonderful. Well, uh, what, what combat areas did you participate in?**

F.E. – In the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, um, in the Panama Gulf, the Panama Canal.

R.J. – **Well, in the Gulf War, there were a lot of chemical things going on with oil, the burning of the oil, and also the fear that chemical weapons could, and might be used, so you had some very interesting responsibilities then. Could you tell us about those?**

F.E. – I stayed in contact with all our subordinate units, officers and NCOs, and went down to those subordinate units to ensure that they were 1. Properly equipped and 2. Properly trained.

R.J. – **And what did they need to be equipped for and trained for?**

F.E. – Okay, they needed to be equipped with chemical protective over garments, gloves, booties—footwear covers—and chemical protective masks with a hood on it.

R.J. – **And, was there great resistance in accepting these responsibilities as far as the regular soldiers?**

F.E. – No. They understood that the Iraqis had

used chemical warfare before, and they were now placed in a position where they could be targets.

R.J. – Very good. **Whereabouts did you go in the Gulf War? Can you give us some locations?**

F.E. – Al Diwaniyah, and . . . I forget, we moved around so much that I forget anything else.

R.J. – I see.

F.E. – I was stationed at Al Diwaniyah, for about six months before the activity took place.

R.J. – **How long were you in the Gulf?**

F.E. – Nine months.

R.J. – **Nine months? All right, you also were in Saudi Arabia?**

F.E. – Yes.

R.J. – **Could you tell us your responsibilities in Saudi Arabia?**

F.E. – I was Chemical Officer for the First Corps Support Command, and I had to ensure that training and equipping in the First Corps Support Command was equivalent to what we'd require should we get into war.

R.J. – **And were you assigned to Saudi Arabia ... was this a US assignment within Saudi Arabia to help them get ready for preparations?**

F.E. – Actually, I was assigned to the First Corps Support Command from the Army's commanding college. I got into the First Corps Support Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; we were deployed to Saudi Arabia as a unit as a whole.

R.J. – **Saudi Arabia is quite a different culture. Did you have to adjust to it?**

F.E. – Oh, yeah.

R.J. – **Did you have to accommodate yourself and also the people under you?**



F.E. – Yes.

R.J. – Could you tell us just a little about that?

F.E. – Hmm. There was, in Saudi Arabia there is a tremendous anti-feminist movement, so all the female members I had were not allowed to drive. They were not allowed in public demonstrations, so we had to accommodate the Saudis in those means.

R.J. – Did this create quite a psychological problem for women?

F.E. – Our female soldiers, yes.

R.J. – So you had to be a psychologist, too, didn't you?

F.E. – Umm, hmm, a bit.

R.J. – Did you see any combat in any of these Middle East regions at all?

F.E. – Yes.

R.J. – Did I see any combat? Did you participate in any combat?

F.E. – No, I never had to pull the trigger, fire a gun at all.

R.J. – All right, okay. Were there ever any casualties in your units in the Middle East?

F.E. – Yes, we had a helicopter go down that had eight of my soldiers on it; two of them did not survive.

R.J. – Quite a thing for a commanding officer.

F.E. – Right.

R.J. – I know you had a number of memorable experiences during this period of time. Can you share one or two of them?

F.E. – When I . . . One of my soldiers came to me and said, "Sir, I'm afraid of dying. What do I need to do?" and I said, "Let me give you some advice from my father, who was in World War II

and faced the Japanese.” And I said, “Don’t think about yourself, think about everybody around you. Think about the mission you’ve been assigned to do and see it to completion, and ask your superiors if you need assistance.”

R.J. – That was very interesting. Can you just briefly tell us about the Panama seizure that was such an important and very unique time in our foreign affairs? What bureau was in this seizure?

F.E. – I was Chemical Officer for a Brigade Task Force out of the 82nd Airborne. We jumped in and I then went to secure landing zones off the Panama Canal to transfer the power back to the Panamanians after we got the thing under control.

R.J. – And you had to jump along with your...?

F.E. – Hmm, hmm, yes. I’ve got 63 paratroops jumps.

R.J. – Well, that’s another aspect of your training and responsibilities as an officer, isn’t it? I mean, you jumped with them so you have these responsibilities. Would you please tell us about the medals and citations you’ve received?

F.E. – Silver Star and Bronze Star were for combat operations; although I didn’t fire a weapon, I was involved in moving people from place to place, units from place to place, and I had to go forward to call them to me as we were moving and engaging the enemy.

R.J. – Since you were of high rank in the service, were you involved in battle planning of any kind?

F.E. – Yes.

R.J. – Could you tell us briefly what that involved?

F.E. – Okay. It involved looking at the equipment the enemy had, the types of equipment, the

types of support they had, and the kind of training they had. And then, an estimation of their morale, their ability to fight under pressure.

R.J. – Very good. Well, we thank you for your service, and I’m sure you had many unique experiences, and so on. Is there any final word you’d like to say as part of this memo? You are part of this process, being the first person interviewed for the Altrusa House Veteran’s program, the oral history program; anything you’d like to put on the record before we stop?

F.E. – If we’re dealing specifically with the Altrusa House, I don’t think there’s anything I want on the record for the Altrusa House. The only thing I would say is that we need to pay equal attention to each and every person who is a member here, both male and female.

R.J. – Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Frederick Meade Evans, thank you for participating and sharing your very interesting experiences as a commissioned officer in the army during really some fascinating periods in American history and in the challenges in foreign relationship we had during that period. Thank you again.

Interview with Fred Evans (F. E.)

featuring Ray Jones (R. J.)

January 18th, 2017



R.J.

Good morning, I'm Ray Jones and I'm interviewing Fred Meade Evans this morning. It is January 18th, the time is five minutes after ten, and we are at Altrusa House. Fred has already been interviewed and given us extensive information about his career in the military, but since he's had such an interesting one, and he was in command during very interesting and challenging times in American military history—American history as a matter of fact—we'd certainly like to add to that and he's agreed to speak to that.

R.J. – Fred, could you tell us more about the major responsibilities that you had as a chemical officer during a time when chemical warfare and bac-

teriological warfare seemed to be looming and were extremely frightening to all of us who heard about it and to the people who sent their sons and daughters into it, and here you were, a major contributor to their safety.

F.E. – Yes.

R.J. – **Could you tell us more about your work there?**

F.E. – Depends on where and when I was located. I went from the Army chemical school to 7th Army Training Command in Grafenwoehr, Germany, then back to Fort Mead, Maryland. Then from Fort Mead I was deployed to Saudi Arabia in the Gulf War and then back again to the national

training center at Fort Irwin, California, and then finally to the Armed Forces Staff College where I finally retired as a Lieutenant Colonel.



R.J. – In most of your places where you were sent, was training involved? Was this the reason why you were sent to a number of different places, Germany and so on? Now I realize that Saudi Arabia and in the Middle East you had real missions, but what about your training? Did each of these situations involve extensive training?

F.E. – Oh, absolutely. Depending on which one of those scenarios you looked at, you had certain individual and collective training requirements. When I say individual, I'm talking about each person, each individual person, and when I say collective training, I'm talking about units working together to accomplish a mission.

R.J. – You mentioned that you were trained in the Army Chemical School; how long a training was that and how complicated was it?

F.E. – It went from six weeks to six months in length, and became very complicated, particu-

larly when each individual was required to wear protective gear that covered the entire body, and masks that covered the face and lungs.

R.J. – Did this include bacteriological warfare training also?

F.E. – Oh, absolutely.

R.J. – Was this considered a new aspect of chemical warfare?

F.E. – No, as a matter of fact, it was considered the oldest form of chemical warfare.

R.J. – Could you tell us why?

F.E. – Simple. The Romans used bacteriological warfare in their fight against the Turks.

R.J. – And what kind of bacteria did they use?

F.E. – Oh, absolutely.

R.J. – So what about when you actually started using your training . . . what was your first mission that actually required you to use this extensive training that you had?

F.E. – Back when I was a company commander, in the 44th Chemical Company, Second Armored Division, at Fort Hood, Texas, we deployed from Fort Hood to Germany to participate in Returned Forces to Germany, or ReForGer, and during that time, I coordinated six missions that were used to train and portray decontamination support to military forces and to the civilian population.

R.J. – So you had to think not only of your own forces but also of populations and how they might be affected?

F.E. – Absolutely.

R.J. – So chemical warfare was one of the most complicated areas?

F.E. – It certainly is. When chemical warfare is

employed, chemical, biological, or nuclear warfare is employed, it impacts not just the military but all the civilian population there too.

R.J. – Do you feel that the US government, the State Department, and other officials understood the threat of chemical warfare at the time you were being trained?

F.E. – It depended on who was in office. The individuals who were appointed under President Jimmy Carter did not, did not understand.

R.J. – Was there a reason for their not understanding, did you know?

F.E. – I think it was all based on internal politics. James Carter appointed people he knew, and they were not extensively trained in international military affairs.

R.J. – When you went to Germany, were you also aware of the developments in the Soviet Union, in chemical and biological warfare?

F.E. – Absolutely. That was part of my job; my job, at 7th Army Training Command, was to make sure that all US forces stationed in Germany were aware of what the Soviets had and had developed and were practicing in terms of using nuclear and chemical warfare.

R.J. – Were they very advanced at that time?

F.E. – Mmm, hmm, more so than were we, because they trained more and they used more live-agent training, actually exposing their troops to nerve, blister agent, and radiological hazards.

R.J. – Of all these types of chemical and biological warfare, of elements, which did you feel were the most horrible or dangerous to your troops and to the population at large?

F.E. – That depends on what scenario you're using. I would say that non-persistent nerve agent that blows with the wind would impact the vast majority of individuals. However, a radiological weapon could do virtually the same thing, and

attack the body a little bit differently than an herb agent.

R.J. – It was all pretty terrible, wasn't it?

F.E. – It was all, yeah, it was lethal, yes, sir.

R.J. – Do you feel that Germany and the European Union was fairly advanced in their understanding of chemical and biological warfare?

F.E. – Understanding the threat: US forces did, the French had much less appreciation for that, the Dutch had some more appreciation for chemical warfare, the Belgians were moderately well-trained, and other forces in Germany were moderately to poorly trained.

R.J. – Did you have to act as a liaison in various other countries?

F.E. – Absolutely. Yes, sir.

R.J. – Was that a very difficult thing to do?

F.E. – ... I, at times, had four different interpreters with me to translate questions and procedures into the various national languages.

R.J. – So you really had an international mission?

F.E. – Yes, sir.

R.J. – As well as international responsibilities for all of this.

F.E. – Yes, sir.

R.J. – When you went to Saudi Arabia, what was your mission there?

F.E. – I was deployed, as the Chemical Officer for the 18th Airborne Corps and our mission, my mission, was to ensure that our forces were prepared to react in case the Iraqis employed chemical warfare as they had against the Kuwaitis.

R.J. – And did they use chemical warfare extensively?

F.E. – They used it to its maximum benefit, which meant that they had to use a lot of it and concentrate it into relatively small areas so that they could get the number of kills they wanted to get.

R.J. – Now you had to organize a number of missions, didn't you, into Iraq, dealing with chemical warfare?

F.E. – About six of them, yes.

R.J. – Were you in Iraq at the time, or did you do this from Saudi Arabia?

F.E. – I did the preponderance of this from Saudi Arabia. I deployed with the 1st Special Forces group to Iraq for about two weeks.

R.J. – This was a very dangerous mission, was it not?

F.E. – We had to jump in, yeah, we had to parachute in.

R.J. – All right. So not only did you have the chemical warfare aspect, but then you had also the jumping from great heights, from an air-

plane, and so on, which made everything even more complicated. When were you trained as an officer in paratrooping? When did that happen? Was it early?

F.E. – When I first was in the Army after I graduated from college, I was assigned for a year as an Infantry Officer, so I had to go to Infantry Basic Training, Infantry Officer Basic Training in 1974—January '74 to June of '74—and then in June, after I graduated from Infantry Officer Basic Training, I went to Airborne Training at Fort Benning, Georgia, for a period of three weeks.

R.J. – Very dangerous training.

F.E. – Mmm, it was.

R.J. – And so you combined these careers, so to speak, chemical officer and also paratroop officer?

F.E. – Yes, sir.

R.J. – Is there anything more you want to tell us about your time in the Middle East? Anything that strikes you and any conditions that you realized would make it extremely difficult for the American military and American government to make a tremendous impact there?

F.E. – Yeah, during the summer, the heat in the desert would get to be 130 degrees. Now wearing heavy chemical-protective clothing in that kind of heat was very debilitating for everybody.

R.J. – Could that have caused deaths or certainly some severe problems healthwise?

F.E. – Heat stress, definitely.

R.J. – So you had those aspects to consider, too. They just made your mission and your responsibilities more complicated each time.

F.E. – It was always fairly complicated. It just depended on who we were training and how, where the unit had come from to participate. For in-





stance, thirty-some percent of the forces deployed into Saudi Arabia were activated reserve component units from the United States. They'd been called up to active duty and then sent to Saudi Arabia. They had a much less strenuous and extensive training period than did the active component units that'd come from places in Germany or the United States that spent all their time doing training.

R.J. – Did you feel that ultimately the training and the education in chemical warfare given to officers and the troops was, let's say, of the very highest level in the US Army?

F.E. – Did I feel that way, no. What did I feel? I was quite certain—because I'm part of the planning staff—that if chemical weapons were employed against our forces, we would respond to the employing agency with nuclear weapons.

R.J. – Do you think the public, the American public, understood any of this?

F.E. – The general public probably never heard of it.

R.J. – Right. Can we then go to another mission you were involved in that the American

public seems to have forgotten, and that is the Panama mission? You parachuted ... First of all, what occurred that created the necessity for US troops to be sent to Panama?

F.E. – Panamanian forces seized parts of the canal and prevented shipping from taking place through the Panama Canal.

R.J. – Were they, was the leadership Communist-inspired?

F.E. – I wouldn't say "Communist-inspired," I would say Panamanian-inspired.

R.J. – Anti-American?

F.E. – Anti-American.

R.J. – So, to have an anti-American group control the Panama Canal would have changed the power relationships in Latin American, and the world, wouldn't it, in a sense?

F.E. – Certainly. Certainly in North and South America, for a given.

R.J. – So you jumped, and where did you jump in?



F.E. – In Panama? We landed next to, I landed next to the Oswego Dam ... on the canal, it opens and closes with the canal to raise and lower the water level so the ships can get through.

R.J. – So you were very close to the canal itself? Were you close to the Panamanian troops.?

F.E. – Absolutely. I came in six hours after the initial troops were sent in from the 82nd Airborne. My planeload was the second brigade that was parachuted in, and we were within two to three miles of active Panamanian forces.

R.J. – Did you meet immediate resistance?

F.E. – We had some, but the majority of the active forces were, had been, if not neutralized, dispersed, because the US Air Force had gone in in bombing missions for three days prior to us jumping in.

R.J. – Was chemical warfare possibilities involved in that mission?

F.E. – It was a concern. It was not a very real possibility, not as real as we had faced against potentially the Russians, had we fought the Russians. But it was a concern, and the concern was that the Panamanians had access to nerve and blister agent.

R.J. – How long was that mission, far as time goes?

F.E. – I spent six and a half weeks, almost seven weeks there. It actually lasted for, uh, we had troops there for five, almost six months.

R.J. – Fred, a third area that we're really interested in finding out about is you mentioned in the previous interview that your father had been in World War II. Could you tell us about his service, and are you from a military family?

F.E. – Absolutely not. I did not grow up as a child of a military enlistee or officer. My dad was drafted in, uh, as World War II kicked off, and he

rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant before the end of the war. He fought, he was a communications specialist, and went in with troops to Panama and to the southern portion of the, fighting against the Japanese off the coast of Hawaii.

R.J. – Was he in the Army all during World War II?

F.E. – Yes, Army.

R.J. – Did you decide at a fairly early age that you wanted to be a member of the Armed Services?

F.E. – I think by the age of thirteen or fourteen, certainly before I was able to drive a car, I was expecting to become a US Army officer.

R.J. – Right. Did your family respond positively to your desire to be an officer?

F.E. – My dad was always reminding me of his experiences. My mother was neither very positive nor very negative, but she always let me know that she was concerned about the possibilities.

R.J. – Well, of course, you had your family to be concerned about you, and then one of your great responsibilities was to be concerned about the troops serving under you. You must have had many instances like this, where you had to help a young person going through these very complicated missions, where, in an atmosphere that was really foreign to some, I mean, you really had a psychological mission that was very, very complicated, too, didn't you?

F.E. – It was challenging. And it was always there. I would always be questioned by junior officers and junior NCOs about the possibility of entering into chemical warfare and what they were to do, and how they were to react.

R.J. – And it was not a straightforward thing.

F.E. – No. It's not.

R.J. – You learned a great deal about the psy-

chology of young men not only just facing ordinary combat but a very special kind of combat.

F.E. – It's quite challenging.

R.J. – Did you come up with any basic principles that you used in dealing with this situation?

F.E. – The most fundamental one was, train everyone under you to react to survive and to react to accomplish the job assigned to you.

R.J. – Both had to be together.

F.E. – Always, They were just like that [crosses index and middle fingers].

R.J. – I believe from everything you've said, you had a marvelous career.

F.E. – Thank you.

R.J. – And can feel that you made a real contribution, during a time that was really very dangerous, not only to you personally but to the men you commanded. It was a very dangerous time for the United States at the same time, so any final word that you want to say?

F.E. – I just hope that the United States employs both military and international political means to avoid every having to deal with chemical or biological warfare on a real basis.

