



## **Citation for this collection:**

MSS 179 Robert H. Richards, Jr., Delaware oral history collection, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware

## **Contact:**

Special Collections, University of Delaware Library  
181 South College Avenue  
Newark, DE 19717-5267  
302.831.2229 / 302.831.1046 (fax)  
<http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec>  
[askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu](mailto:askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu)

## **Terms governing use and reproduction:**

Use of materials from this collection beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law.

Permission to publish or reproduce is required from the copyright holder. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions. [askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu](mailto:askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu)

## **A note about transcriptions:**

Of the original 252 audio-recordings in this collection, 212 of these tapes were transcribed around the time of the original recordings (between 1966 and 1978). In 2012, Cabbage Tree Solutions was contracted to create transcriptions for the remaining tapes. Corrections to and clarifications for all transcriptions are welcome, especially for names and places. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions. [askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu](mailto:askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu)

COLONEL DONALD M. ASHBRIDGE  
RETIRED DIRECTOR PLACEMENT BUREAU  
UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

Interviewed by:  
John H. Gauger  
August 28, 1966

Transcribed by:  
Marie McNulty

COLONEL DONALD M. ASHBRIDGE

INTERVIEWED AUGUST 28, 1966

PERSONAL DATA SHEET

- 1909- Commissioned Second Lieutenant
- 1917- Coast Artillery School Battery Officer's Course  
France with heavy artillery in August  
War Department Staff
- 1925- Army War College graduate  
Staff of Phillipines Division--Operations and Intelligence
- 1932- P.M.S.&T. at University of Delaware  
34
- 1934- Retired from active duty because of injury
- 1936- Director of Placement Bureau of University of Delaware
- 1940- Recalled to active duty at P.M.S.&T. at University of Delaware
- 1942- Promoted to Colonel in July  
Commandant of Army Specialized Training Unit at University of Delaware
- 1946- Relieved from active duty January 31  
Again Director of Placement Bureau at University of Delaware in February
- 1952- Resigned June 3  
Received meritorious service award for ASTP Unit Command in 1945  
Traveled in Asia, Europe, United States, and Canada

This interview is with Colonel Donald M. Ashbridge, retired from the United States Army, retired director of the Placement Bureau of the University of Delaware. The interview is conducted July 28, 1966, by John H. Gauger.

Interviewer: Did you have all of your schooling in Philadelphia?

Colonel: Yep.

Interviewer: How did you become interested in joining the army?

Colonel: The day I was born I wanted to go in the army, but I couldn't go to West Point because I had a bad eye. Do you see this thing here?

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Colonel: Well, I had trouble with this left eye, and it wasn't perfect. It was a good eye, but it wasn't perfect; and I never would have made---- I got in when they weren't quite so cantankerous from civil life, and in 1909, directly in the coast artillery I was commissioned, second lieutenant, 1909, April, 1909. I started in then, and I was stationed first in Fort duPont; and I went over there for about a week. Then I went to Fort Monroe for school. See there were twenty of us who were sort of officers who went down there to school. I went back to Fort duPont after that school was over, and I was there until the first of January, 1913, nearly almost, not quite five years. Four years, and I went down to the coast artillery school in Fort Monroe. In the meantime, I had become a first

lieutenant. In the meantime, I had gone down to Galveston, Texas, for a short period. They were having trouble with the Mexican, the people in Mexico, and I came back----

Interviewer: You didn't go to Mexico?

Colonel: No, I went as far as Galveston. I got married; I was a first lieutenant then. I went to Fort Monroe to school. When that was over, I went to Jackson barracks in New Orleans, and from there I went to the First World War. I came back, and I was then a major. I came back; the war was practically over. I went to the military intelligence division in the War Department, where I remained for about nearly four years, as I remember, where I had all kinds of jobs. I went back to what they call the advanced coast artillery school. Then I went back to the military intelligence division for a month or two. Then I went to Leavenworth to school. I graduated high enough there to be selected to go to War College. Between my graduation there and the War College I was at Fort Eustus where I commanded two different regiments. One was 155 GPS and the other railway artillery, I don't remember the caliber of---- I went from there to the War College in Washington. In those days you couldn't go any higher in the military echelon of education than the War College. Let's see, where did I go from there? My mind is a little hazy.

Interviewer: To the Phillipines?

Colonel: Yeah, to the Phillipines where I was G3 and chief of staff of the Phillipine Division. I came back, and I went up to Fort H. G. Wright. I went from there to Europe Insular Affairs in the War Department. Then I came from there to here.

I was here for approximately--1930 I came here--I think it was 1930 or 31, I don't seem to remember--I was here about two years when I had a piece of bad luck, and I was retired for having an operation. I had about four or five of them up to that time, and I had nearly just short of 26 years service. See, I was retired then, and I did nothing for about a year.

I met a man on a train one day from here who Mrs. Ashbridge knew, and I knew passively. He said: "Why don't you try to get a job helping the seniors get placed when they graduate." Well, that appealed to me. This job I had in the War Department I didn't go around and talk to cabinet ministers, but I went around and talked to people next to them, assistant cabinet ministers, asking them to do this and to do that and about things that were connected with the Phillipines and Puerto Rico and the customs receivership of Santa Domingo. That was under the War Department then. It was the best thing I could have done to come here and gotten this job as head of the Placement Bureau because it gave me a little insight on how to approach people, you know. So I did a job for Doctor HULLIHEN who was president of the place then, and who since long been dead. But it took his eye, and this matter came up of organizing a Placement Bureau. He said: "They would laugh at me, the Board of Trustees would." "They wouldn't do anything of the kind," I said. So he brought the thing up at the Board of Trustees meeting, and they finally decided that they would have a Placement Director. On the first of January, 1936, I started in.

Interviewer: Weren't there too many colleges that had placement bureaus?

Colonel: Very few, very few.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Colonel: I admit that this is grammertical--poor grammer to put it first--but it was me who was head of the Bureau, and one secretary who was supposed to be part time but wasn't. She was Miss Carolyn Cobb at that time, and she graduated here six months before. I guess she got more salary than I did. I got nothing practically. We started in.

I worked the thing up until I was called into active duty again on sixth of December, 1940. That's when they had all this hullabalo over the First World War, and they called the officers back in and the enlisted men too. From then until February 1, 1946, I was on active duty, and it had nothing to do with this place. Then they released me and put me back on the retired list again.

And I served until the first of July, 1952, when I resigned. I had had enough of it, and they had enough of me too. I was 16 years I was connected with this place as director of the Placement Bureau minus the time I was in the army. It was really a very good job, very fine job; but it was terribly nerve racking. I was 66 years old when I quit the thing on the first of July, 1952. I put in a terrible lot of hours. I was up there many nights until 7 o'clock. I just couldn't go on any further. I could have. The president of the place said to me: "Why don't you go on." I said: "I can't do it; I better get out of here while the going's good instead of waiting for you to tell me to get out." And I went, and I never regretted it. I served under four presidents up there, and I got along with them all.

Interviewer: How did industry cooperate with you in placing people?

Colonel: They cooperated about 95 per cent. I hate to tell you this because it's blowing my own horn when I shouldn't do it. I haven't any right too, but I had many complimentary remarks made to me about this Placement Bureau. As you said: You were one of the first people to start this Placement Bureau, and I said I was. There were very few of them; a few of the larger colleges had it. Not many of them, but a few. It was put under--in many cases--I say many, of the few who had it--it was put under not an individual like me. It was a secondary job to somebody in the Engineering Department of a college or somebody in the Arts and Sciences Department, and they ran it. Somebody from industry came there from outside, and let this man who was running the thing, let him know he was coming around, and he would tell around or he put a notice that the fellow was coming and that was about the end of it. Well, I didn't do that. I went very far with him, and it worked out all right. It was tough, but it worked; and it shows, and it got a very fine standing.

Mrs. Wyatt, she succeeded me. I recommended her highly for the job, and she became quite prominent in the thing. She was here four years before I resigned. She was a good successor to me because she was well broken in.

Now, I forget the dates on this thing. I can't tell you the dates, but there was a man whose name I don't have any recollection of up at the University of Pennsylvania during the



war, and he started this thing up there to get young people up there to go to--I don't know what it was called--but he had these young fellows go around and start in on--I was just trying to remember what that thing was, and I can't do it. But he had a little organization up there at the University of Pennsylvania working along lines of education for people who were not fit to go to the war and so forth. Finally when the war was over, he withdrew from the thing, and the fellow who was in charge of up there at Pennsylvania got me--I don't know what he got me for, but he did--got me to start something, association, of nine of these colleges which had been then--some of them had been--I'm trying to get the thing straight--we had formed an association and called it the "nine old men", you see. Let's get this straight, I'm giving it to you enough so you got it straight, and he called it the "nine old men". They met down here for the first time. We had a meeting here and got the thing under way. I remember saying to this chap from the University of Pennsylvania: "Won't this other fellow be sore that you're taking this off his hands." "No," he said, "he came to me and told me he was glad I was doing it." You see, they were both up there at Pennsylvania, so he was glad that it was being taken off his hands. We formed this thing called the Middle Atlantic Placement Offices Association. We had a couple of meetings here and out at F&M at Lancaster and so forth. We finally got the thing going, and we were still the nine old men in the thing; and we were the backbone of it. Here's my thing up there, you see that thing up there at the top?

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Colonel: So, it's a going concern now. It's a far different thing now than it was then. Now they charge members and everybody about \$25 to show up at one of the meetings. They didn't charge anything then. They may be charging more for all I know. They have a meeting a year and all. Mrs. Wyatt became president of that thing one year, she took my place here, you see, and she did all right. So I was very happy that she had. She was a member of the executive committee and so forth before she was president. And that all tied in. I can't tell you any more that I know of.

Interviewer: I was wondering about this unit that you trained, the unit during World War II? Army Specialized Training?

Colonel: Army Specialized Training. We didn't have that at first. It was ROTC. I replaced a fellow that was here. He went on. You see, he was an active officer when he moved out he remained so. I took his place. And then they moved about 300, as I remember, 300 people from this ASTP, Army Specialized Training Program, brought them in here and the professors who remained here acted as the instructors. Now they brought the cream--if they hunted all over the army--of course they did this other places--but they couldn't have gotten any better people no matter who they were. The cream of the crop came from the army to this place and other places like it. It was a damn outrage, to tell you the truth. Somebody with a lot of pull put the thing over in Washington, so they put the thing over, and they formed things up here and about thirty or forty ROTC which were not really fit to go to war, they still carried

on here as ROTC. I had these 300 other people. It got up to 600 at one time. They had to live up to it. I had an awful reputation, but it paid off because before the thing was over we had--I can't think what they was called either--but we had a thing that went on their arms here that showed it had excellent. We were the only ones granted in the whole Second Service Command, you see, which was three or four states around here. There were about 30 of these organizations in this thing, and 30 units in the different colleges, and this was the only place that got that distinction given to them. People wondered why they ever let themselves be brought here, but I never saw such a esprit de corps on the part of any unit. It was wonderful; it was wonderful. They certainly lived up to it.

Interviewer: What was the purpose of the training?

Colonel: It gave them an education, and they were supposed to be officers after they got out.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

Colonel: They were enlisted men when they came here; they were supposed to be officer material after they got out of here. How many of them got to be officers I never found out. I sent a great many of them to a division out in Colorado, out at--what was that called--the Fifth Division, I think it was. I don't remember the number of that either, but we packed them into a train and sent them out there to Camp Something out there. I was there after the war to see it.

I didn't have no trouble with them. They all behaved themselves. They had too. I didn't stand for a bit of nonsense out of them, you see. They attended to their studies; they worked like heavers. They went out of here on Saturdays

at a little after noon on pass until Sunday night. They were spooned up like brigadar generals. They really looked right, I'm telling you. They did. I had inspection of them before they went out of here down here at the train. The B&O Railroad was running then, and they were down here and took a train that left at 2:40 or something. I never saw soldiers look better than they did. They really were right. I had no trouble with them at all. They were really the cream of the crop. But it was outrageous bringing them here because they took them right out of divisions and brought them here, and they wouldn't take any second rank people out of them. These division commanders were told to send the best that they had, and that's what they had to do. They wouldn't monkey with them. They just took the best that they had, and they were right ready to go to France, some of those divisions, and they sent them here and other places, equal places. But this place here we didn't fool with them, that was all. But other places didn't have the people that we did.

I couldn't go out in the field; I was about 50 some years old when this thing was going on, and I wasn't in very good shape physically. I mean I could do most everything, but I didn't have any business to do it.

Interviewer: Could we go back to your Phillipine Islands experience?

Colonel: If I lived to be 100 years old I couldn't have any better experience as a soldier than I had out there. That was wonderful. It was G3, that's the operations officer in the Phillipine Division. And I was a chief of staff of it. The

chief of staff went away, and through seniority, I took his place. It was all very fine, a general staff job, and I learned a great deal. The commander was a very fine fellow-- General--I can't think of his name--General--there were two of them, and one of them particularly---- We had war games and exercises and maneuvers out in the field.

Interviewer: Did you have trouble with the Phillipine natives while you were there?

Colonel: Not at all.

Interviewer: They were all calmed down by then.

Colonel: Oh, this was long ago. They had no trouble with them. No trouble. No trouble whatever. They were all good soldiers, only one regiment was white people, and all the rest were Phillipinos. They behaved themselves, and they were wonderful soldiers. They showed it during the war. They fought like tigers. They fought like tigers; they were wonderful soldiers. Never had any trouble. Two or three of them got drunk, that's all I ever saw any trouble with them. They were wonderful. And the best looking soldiers anybody ever saw. They shined themselves up and never went out looking like bums or anything else,

Interviewer: Did you have any particularly interesting experiences there in the Phillipines? Do you remember?

Colonel: No, I don't remember. I was on a destroyer for about two or three weeks. All I can remember is I changed destroyers, I wanted to go into Hong Kong, and I changed destroyers out in the middle of the China Sea. We pitched and rolled a bit.

I suppose I led a colorful life, but you don't think anything of it. You forget it. Now my life's nearly over, and I've forgot about it, you see. You just don't think things don't come back to you. You don't seem to remember. If I had my eyesight, I wouldn't mind.

Interviewer: How about the War College? What was that like when you went there? You said that was about the best.

Colonel: It was just like going to--you might call--it was like going to a PHD course in any other college. That's what it was. I don't know that it was any different than that. There was lots of work connected with it. It was a good school, very good. You learned a lot there. The thing was that it was principally small committees. You didn't do very much by yourself. There were little committees, maybe 2,3,4, or 5 people. The committee worked things up, and then somebody on the committee got up and informed the whole class what the thing, how it worked out. I remember I got up four or five times in front of the whole class of about a hundred and told them about what we had been doing. I don't know why this stays in my mind, but it does. I had the military intelligence division because I some experience in that. I was up on the platform one day pointing toward the map on the wall with the pointer, and I was saying something, and the lights all went out, and the pointer was pointing toward the wall, and we had no lights, no map, or anything else. It seemed to arouse their sense of the comic very much.

END OF TAPE.