

TRANSCRIPTION

Name of Oral History Project: History of ROTC

Tape 2 of 2. The number of the tape being transcribed: 2 (EM/ROTC-1987-2)

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Name of principal interviewer: Eleonore Mitchell

Date of interview: 23 Nov 1987 Place of interview: Western Kentucky University

Other persons present at interview: none

Equipment used: Reel-to-reel ; Cassette X ; Model: Marantz

Tape used: Brand: Scotch AVX 60; Amount (side 1) ca. 7 minutes; (side 2) --

Summary description of interview context and contents: My informants and I talked about the history of ROTC, in general as well as focusing on Western Kentucky University's program. We sat in one of the rooms at Western's Department of Military Science, and the interview went on smoothly in a relaxed atmosphere.

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MITCHELL: In the '60s and '70s, I think, the military had quite a few problems in America because of Korea and Vietnam. What influence did that have on ROTC training? Do you know?

MILLER : I know, because I was here in the late '60s and early '70s as a student. We used to get a considerable amount of verbal abuse on campus when we walked around in uniform, and that wasn't, you know, real great to live with, and we used to do an awful lot of ushering in the football and basketball games in uniform, the dress uniforms, and got quite a bit of verbal abuse. But the other side of the coin was, that the cadets that were in the program believed in what they were doing so strongly that, you know, they put up with that, and it really kind of made for a stronger program in itself, and actually the program then, bottom-line, was really, numberswise and everything, was really stronger than the program is now, because back then we had basically the same amount of numbers, but everybody drilled, where it has now only half the people drilled. And, you know, it was very difficult to maybe get some people involved in ROTC, but, you know, there is always going to be a percentage of people that are interested in the military. But, you know, I personally experienced a lot of verbal abuse on campus, you know,

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it didn't get out of hand, but there were times at basket-
ball games and football games where we would have students,
sometimes the students were just obnoxious, and sometimes
they were drunk, they would really come up and verbally
abuse us, and we would simply have to stand there and take
it, until a security officer, or faculty, or somebody
would come up and remove them from the game or whatever.
And there were times that got to be quite bad, but that
was the exception rather than the rule. Fortunately, most
students maybe didn't necessarily believe in the military,
but left us alone. But, you know, we didn't have any
buildings set on fire, University of Kentucky had their
ROTC department set on fire during that era.

MINNER : So did Morehead State.

MILLER : You are right.

MINNER : I was in '69, I got out of the Navy and did just return
from Vietnam, and went to Morehead, but I did not go in
ROTC, I had, you know, really, I didn't have any interest
at that time to go back into the military, but I do not
remember except, you know, just some very minor altercations
with ROTC, even though I wasn't involved in it from either
side, I was more or less neutral. I think that it was
either an indifferent attitude or else a very hostile
attitude toward ROTC at that time, and later, after I left
Morehead, the ROTC building was burnt down.

MILLER : But we even had to deal with some faculty members. I had
classes where, it created problems that I had, we had to
wear uniform in class, because back then you had to wear
uniform in class a minimum of once a week all day, and there
were times when we had to put up with comments from
innuendos from faculty.

MITCHELL: Was there, I suppose there was a decline in applications
for officer training. Was it pretty strong, or -- (MILLER:
You mean during the '60s and '70s?), yeah.

MILLER : Well, not really because one way to defer being drafted
during that time, that era, was that if you were an active
student, of course, if you were just a college student,
period, maintaining a certain grade point, you were, had a
student deferment, but a number of people were involved
in the program, in ROTC, for that reason also. Historically,
Western's enrollment in ROTC has not fluctuated a great
deal, except for, I think, during the early '80s it got down
to a real low point, for one reason or another, but it's
been around 250 to 300 off up and down essentially for
years. Except for back in the early '60s, when our society
lended itself more towards that, in '61, '62, '63, like I
referred to earlier, Western had an extremely large ROTC
program.

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MINNER : In the early '60s, when the draft was still in effect, you could either go to Vietnam as an officer or go as a private, so you couldn't have a student deferment, so students selected to go to ROTC, and that in itself kept them from being drafted into the military as a private. So, it made for an incentive to do well in the program, too.

MITCHELL: I'm wondering why the American military finished the draft. Was that some reaction on Vietnam, or --

MINNER : You mean, did away with the draft?

MITCHELL: Yeah.

MINNER : Well, I don't think the military did that, I think the politicians did that. It was like they did with Vietnam. That was strictly out of popular opinion, I guess, and the American people were tired of Vietnam, they had been there for ten years, I guess, eleven years, and they just didn't want to see it, they were fed up with it. The politicians that were elected into office at that time were elected by these individuals, so they had pretty much the same viewpoint. So it was a low, as far as the military goes, it was a low period during military history, when they did away with the draft.

MILLER : But some other contributing factor to that is the draft, if you examine, examine evidence, you'll find out that the draft truly was discriminated in the form that an inproportionate amount of minorities were drafted, an inproportionate amount of lower middle-class white died in Vietnam, just like minorities did, and if you'll examine surveys and things, you'll find that young people, even though some people think there's a rebirth of conservatism in young people now, everything that you read will indicate to you that young people simply don't acknowledge the fact that they owe their country military service. And they simply don't. And politicians are simply reacting to that, and there's surveys getting done addressing that year in and year out, and this has been going on, you know, especially during the '80s, young people simply don't acknowledge or accept the fact that you should serve your country for a period of a year or two, as a, or as a benefit of just being a citizen of the United States, they don't accept that attitude. That's also, you know, a lot of indicators that our society is changing a lot, but, of course, you know, that even though the required draft is no longer in effect, registration for the draft is still in effect. Okay.

MITCHELL: Well, I think that's about all I wanted to ask you. Now as I told CPT Minner before, I'm going to donate the tapes to the Folklife Archives, and I'd like you to sign a Donor Form for me.

MILLER : Okay. I can sign either one of these? Either place? (MITCHELL: Yeah.) Okay. [Signs.] Do I need to date it? (MITCHELL: No, it's already dated.) Okay. [Gives form to CPT Minner, who signs.]

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MITCHELL: Okay, that's it.

MINNER : Okay.

MILLER : Enjoyed it. Hope that helps you out in whatever endeavour
you have.

END OF THE INTERVIEW

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