

Interviewer:

Good afternoon. We're here in the Center for Oral History on March 31, 2015, with Retired Air Force General James E. Dalton. Sir, can you please spell your last name for us?

James Dalton:

D-A-L-T-O-N.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. And sir, you grew up in New York City, correct?

James Dalton:

Yes.

Interviewer:

And did you come from a military family?

James Dalton:

Well, my dad was in World War I, and he was in the Fighting 69th, which is a pretty famous regiment. Later, it became the 165th Infantry. So that's the only contact, and then after the war he got out and went to work, and was working in New York when I was born, so.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. What did your dad do?

James Dalton:

He was a purchasing agent for the Board of Transportation, the City of New York. He bought all the things for the subway buses and trolleys and coal and so on. He had a couple of hundred people working for him, so he had a pretty responsible job.

Interviewer:

And what did your mom do, sir?

James Dalton:

My mom was a housewife.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. And growing up, tell me a little bit about your childhood, please.

James Dalton:

Well, I got interested in airplanes; airplanes fascinated me, the idea that something could fly. And so when I was pretty young, I would make model airplanes out of balsa wood and paper and everything. I'd go down to the local airfield, which was Floyd Bennett Field there in Brooklyn, and we'd go down on Sundays and I'd watch the airplanes fly. It was only \$5.00 to fly around the Statue of Liberty, but nobody ever gave me a ride to go do that. So I always had this fascination about flying in airplanes from as early as I can remember, being interested. And I went to a public grammar school, P.S. 89 - they all had numbers in New York - and then went on to the Brooklyn Technical High School, which I think really was a very, very important move. Brooklyn Tech was one of in those days the three test entry high schools in New York City; Bronx Science, Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Tech, you had to pass an exam to get in.

And it was four years of math and science and language, and it was really a college prep program of English and math, physics and chemistry, mechanical drawing. They also had lathe-working and foundry-working and pattern-making and foundry-casting, all in one high school. Still a very famous high school.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. And sir, after high school, how did you determine what you wanted to do for college?

James Dalton:

Yeah. Well, that was interesting. It was late in high school. I said, "You know, I really want to fly airplanes," and I wasn't obviously going to pay to train myself. "And if I want to get trained, it's got to be in the military somewhere. And if I'm going to go to the military and learn how to fly, why don't I go to a place where if I really like what I'm doing in the military, I've really got a foundation to build a career." That turned

out to be West Point.

Interviewer:

Had you been up to West Point during your childhood?

James Dalton:

No, I'd never been here. I had actually gone from high school to the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn to study aeronautical engineering. And I - I don't know, you probably don't know this, but in New York City, people graduate every six months from high school, and so I graduated in January of '49. They said, "If you want to come to college you've got to take a year between February '49 and September." So I did. I probably wouldn't ever do that again. 18 credits in 14 weeks in the summer; not what you want to do. And so I did it, and I was a third alternate, because I had late decided, "Gee, I really think I'd like to go to West Point," so I was the third alternate. The principle, the first alternate, and the second alternate all got in. And the story, true story is that the principle and the first alternate flunked out. The second alternate graduated with the class of '53. The principle in the first - I was the principle the following year. The previous principal and first alternate came back with me to the class of '54. And the principle flunked out again, and the old first alternate graduated with me in '54, so that was sort of how I - you know, I came to the thought late, and wasn't able to get a principle appointment, so I spent a year going to school before I came here, but.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. And how did you find West Point? Was it a good experience for you?

James Dalton:

Yeah. Well, it was - you know, I was a little older, having been to college, although a lot of people in my class had been to college. In fact I mean probably about half the people had something, would be my guess. But well, it's always a little shock when you - I told them - what was then the West Academic Building. You walk through the Sally Port, my dad dropped me off there at the front and said good-bye, and I walked through, and suddenly the world descends on you and the world changes. You say, you know, "What's this all about?" You know something's going to happen so if you've got your head screwed on halfway, you know you'd better be ready for whatever takes place. And so yeah, it's kind of a experience, but I think if you want to be here, you want to be here. And as I tell kids who are thinking about going, I say, "Don't go for anybody else. It's too hard to go for anybody else. Go for yourself, or don't go at all."

And we've all seen cases where people quite frankly are going for somebody else. In fact, there was a fellow in my class, God, it may be fifth generation, may be eighth; he didn't want to be here. He just took a space from somebody who really did want to be here. And so when I talk to kids, I, you know, "Don't go for your mom or your dad, whatever. Go for you, or don't go at all."

Interviewer:

Yes sir. What was the most challenging aspect of being at West Point for you?

James Dalton:

Well, some of it was - probably the hardest subject-wise was taking Russian, because I'd studied French and German, they said, "Well, they're not going to let you take anything you've seen before." I said, "Well, it's the Cold War, maybe I should take Russian." So I took Russian, and that - I thought Russian was hard work. The irony of one of the courses, the book in physics we used was Hausman and Slack. It was written at Brooklyn Poly, and I took physics. I took that book from the guy who wrote it before I came here. And so we got to the sophomore year and said, "Oh, we have physics this year, and we have this book by Hausman and Slack." I said, "Fine by me; that's a great book. I'll be happy to see it." But the technical stuff always came - well, Brooklyn Tech was an enormous foundation, and so that went. And probably I was less interested in English and all this other soft stuff, I guess, that we would say.

But academics wasn't that big a challenge, I didn't think, except for Russian, which I had to work hard at. The trouble with languages, I think, here - like Russian - is you study it for two years, you take the fluency test, and you walk out the door, and you have nobody to talk to, and it just, you know. Except the lady in the drugstore, who I listened to her talk and said, "Where are you from?" "I'm Russian," she said, "do you know anything about Russia at all?" So, "I know a little bit about it." So when I left, I said, "Dosvedanya," and her head snapped, but that's about the mileage. But in the SALT - it did come in handy when we were in the SALT Talks. I sat in meetings with General Ogarkov, and could sort of get the gist of the answer to the questions. We both had our own interpreters, but I could sort of tell a little bit of what was coming in the answers, which was a pretty interesting experience, but.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Did you do any athletics while you were here?

Interviewer:

No. I was an intramural player. We had a great lacrosse - I was in C-2, and those days, it was all by height. The funniest thing I think of is always I think A-1 played A-2 in intramural football one year, down in the old Shea Stadium field. You got these 6'4" guys - fortunately, the Corps Squad guys were all gone - playing these little guys, these little piranha 5'6", and chasing these big guys around. So you know it was - but we had a very good lacrosse team in C-2. Got to the Brigade finals and lost in triple overtime, which was really, I must say, painful.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

James Dalton:

Or as my classmate that I hit with a shot that came straight out off his knee instead of going into the net, came back and he said, "My knee still hurts," he says when I see him at reunions.

Interviewer:

And then when it came time to decide a branch, how was that for you?

James Dalton:

Well, I knew I wanted to go in the Air Force. I mean that was it. You always hope your eyes stay good. One of the family jokes is that they tell you, "Sir, well, you have a deviated septum and you're not going to be qualified to go to pilot training." I said, "Well, then you'd better fix it," and so I was operated on, and the hospital used to be over near Grant Hall, and had my deviated septum straightened out so I could get in the Air Force. But the 177 slots in my class all went to pilot training, so we all went. If it went through the class not filled, then they would take people who weren't going to go to pilot training, but it never got there - there was something like I think 235 people had taken the flight physical, and therefore really could, if they wanted to, go to the Air Force, but there are only 177 slots.

Interviewer:

How big was your class, sir?

James Dalton:

Like 635, something like that.

Interviewer:

Okay, so near -

Interviewer:

25% sent to the Air Force. Yeah, you got 25% of the Naval Academy, 25% from West Point, because the Air Force Academy wasn't in place, and that was the deal. And there were like 235 people who took the flight physical, so there were a lot of people who wanted to go. And you'd get a survey in your mailbox, "Are you going to go Air Force? Where are you?" The people trying to figure out where the break point was going to be. A lot of screaming in the theater. They put us all in the theater, and when they issued the list, 1 through 634, put us all in the theater. Had big black boards, you know, Infantry

205, Engineers, 50, you know, had all the numbers. Number one, heâ€™d say something, theyâ€™d start erasing numbers by changing them in. When Air Force started to get towards zero, a lot of screaming and yelling going on.

Interviewer:

Where were you in the class?

Interviewer:

I was the 29th guy to get in the Air Force. I remember that. I only remember that because after the big meeting we had a small meeting on what base you were going to go to, and they went down, sorting everybody in order and everything. And I had wanted to go to Florida and thatâ€™s where I went.

Interviewer:

Very good. So what base in Florida?

James Dalton:

Bartow - it was a civilian air base in Florida, near Winter Haven.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, did you have any Air Force training while you were a Cadet? Did they do anything up at Stewart Air Field?

James Dalton:

No. No. We all took the same training there was. I mean you know we werenâ€™t even allowed to jump out of airplanes. We got to jump out of the tower. Weâ€™d go into Fort Benning, weâ€™d jump off the platforms and landing rolls and all this other stuff, and we could jump out of the tower with just the straps, you know. which I think is worse than jumping out of airplanes probably; itâ€™s more intimidating. But they wouldnâ€™t let us jump out of airplanes. I think with the different chute and the less likely youâ€™re going to have accidents than the standard chute probably, but. No, it was no Air Force. The only thing out there that was Air Force, my TAC Officer for three years happened to be an Air Force Major, and Jim Allen, who was later an Air Force four-star general, was there on the staff. He would show flying movies on Wednesday afternoon in the West Academic Building, so if you wanted to see something about learning to fly airplanes you could go to the West Academic Building on Wednesday afternoon and see these movies about how to fly airplanes.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. And then once you got to the Air Force Basic Course, how was that for you?

James Dalton:

Good. No, it was good. A lot of academics, and the people at Bartow were Naval Academy graduates. The West Point graduates, and people from either Texas, Oklahoma, Oklahoma A&M, and Louisiana State, I think, where the other people are from. A lot of academics, a lot of electrical, hydraulic, and so on - and flying.

Interviewer:

What did you learn to fly on?

James Dalton:

Learned first a Piper Cub. We used to actually spin the Piper Cub. We learned how to spin it and everything. Thatâ€™s the first plane you soloed, then the T-6, if youâ€™ve seen that. Other bases were upscale; they had T-28s and T-34s and then T-28s. We had the old T-6, and thatâ€™s what we learned to fly in. And then I went from there to B-25s. They wanted regular officers into the multi-engine business, and so we learned to fly B-25s.

Interviewer:

And so after all that, after all your training, what was your assignment?

James Dalton:

I got assigned to the Military Air Transport Service. Went down to learn how to fly the C-54, which is a DC-4 military equivalent, and then went to Charleston. And we had some new Super Constellation, so I got to transition and fly; so before I went to graduate school, I was at Charleston about three years. I flew Super Constellations. I have about 2,000 hours in

the Super Connie.

Interviewer:

And about what year was this, sir?

James Dalton:

Thatâ€™s like â€˜58.

Interviewer:

Okay.

James Dalton:

Went to pilot training for a year, and then spent almost three years at Charleston, and then went to graduate school.

Interviewer:

And what was graduate school for you?

James Dalton:

Well, I really wanted to go to a civilian college, just to see what it was all about, and the graduate guided missiles for our government was something that really interested me, â€™cause you know guided missiles were becoming a big important thing. And I wish Iâ€™d gone about the summer before; some people went in the fall. I started in the fall â€™58, Some people got there in the summer, and that one math course up turned out later to be something I wish Iâ€™d had, â€™cause it wouldâ€™ve made some of the problem-solving using transforms a lot easier than the way we were solving them. But I really liked it; it was interesting, challenging, youâ€™re sort of on your own. I had to keep flying, though. To get my flying pay, Iâ€™d have to go to Selfridge Field, and Iâ€™d have to fly on the - and we were only flying on Friday nights, Saturdays, and Sundays, so I was flying on the weekends.

Interviewer:

Where was your graduate school?

James Dalton:

Michigan; University of Michigan.

Interviewer:

Okay. And so youâ€™d had to keep up your hours to keep up your certification?

James Dalton:

Yeah, I had to fly on the weekend, and go to school and pass all their classes.

Interviewer:

Okay. And you got a masterâ€™s in?

James Dalton:

You get two masterâ€™s. You take these degrees really interlock. You may take one course. One was aeronautical and astronautical, the other was instrumentation. Instrumentation, you really think of it as automatic control systems, and the other, obviously rocket propulsion, aerodynamics, heat transfer. Over here you have a lot of electrical automatic control system, niquest diagrams, and all these things; if youâ€™re familiar with any of that, thatâ€™s it. So you take them at the same time; you get one in June and one in August, degrees are issued.

Interviewer:

And were you married at this time?

James Dalton:

No, I got married while I was going to graduate school - another long story. I got on an airplane in December of 1958 to fly to New York for Christmas, and the stewardess on the airplane and I got to talking, and long story short, 11 months later we were married, so it was fate, I guess.

Interviewer:

As the two people that were interested in aircraft.

James Dalton:

Two people that had a lot in common, interest in flying in airplanes, yeah.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. And so after grad school, what did you do next?

James Dalton:

I went to Los Angeles and the ballistic missile business, and that's where I got involved in development of the operational targeting problems for the inertially guided Atlas Titan and Minuteman missiles, and did a lot of accuracy analysis, those kind of things. So I spent a lot of time working with the Strategic Air Command, who had the missiles, who was going to get the missiles, while we built the operational targeting programs.

Interviewer:

All right, and so when you talk about this, did you do the mechanics of the targeting process, or was it -

James Dalton:

No, it's a software development where you have this, you have a basic flight program, and the missile knows where it is. And the constants that are going to be placed in those equations that are going to be worked on are generated by the targeting program. So it's a unique set of guidance constants for this physical location and that physical target; unique information, and that's generated by the computer, and in the old days, fed into the missile computing system. Now, in the early days, things like the memory there had a disk, if you can - it sounds arcane now. It had a one-sided disk memory, and therefore one of the biggest configuration control problems was programming that disk, because everybody needed something on it, and it didn't necessarily work. And so what you're doing is providing a unique set of guidance constants to go into the standard equation that will guide that missile from that point to that target.

Interviewer:

So this is the early generation of computing and cyber stuff, right?

James Dalton:

Well, Michigan was ahead in this. In the instrumentation program, we actually took computer programming, computer design. Michigan had - we kind of smile now - a big computer center with this IBM 704 - my goodness, this machine is probably in your watch today. But you know, this big computing center, and we all learn to program in machine language. I don't know if any of you have ever programmed in machine language, but we learned how to program in machine language just to understand the detail. And then you built on top of it. They had a thing called M.A.D. - Michigan Algorithmic Decoder - which was really a higher-level language that allowed engineers then to use computing, which is the way it is basically today. You do click one thing, but you don't know all that's taking place underneath it. But this way, we learned computer design. We learned about programming. So they had an early - Michigan Electrical Engineering Department had an early head start.

Interviewer:

This must have been very cutting edge at the time.

James Dalton:

Yeah, it really was. So then I went out and worked with S.T.L. S.T.L. was the major Air Force supporter in the ballistic missile business. The guys I worked with were civilians in software development, and I had come sort of with a nice background because a lot of missile guidance has understanding of not only guidance systems, but propulsion systems, control systems. So a lot of the people I worked with had come out of Doc Draper's M.I.T. Inertial Guidance business.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

James Dalton:

I was the guy from Michigan, as I used to tell them, it was to keep the rest of you guys from Massachusetts honest.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, I don't know if you can comment on this or not, but so as things have

progressed since the time you were doing this, which mustâ€™ve been about 1960 time frame?

James Dalton:

Youâ€™re right. Right, the early â€™60s.

Interviewer:

Yes sir - to today, how has the guided missile system, or laser guided munitions, or anything like that - how has that progressed?

James Dalton:

Well, yeah, thatâ€™s a good question. Well, they - laser-guided and JDAM are GPS-guided, if you will; systems are different. Although those things mightâ€™ve been useful for us to update, â€™cause youâ€™re always worrying about guidance system drift and everything, and errors being introduced. Particularly when you think about in an ICBM, one foot per second error in the trajectory plane is a mile at the target, so youâ€™ve really got to have very precise guidance. And the thing I worked on was giving more flexibility to the targeting process, so that you could literally target the missiles. Not by going out and reading a new tape into it, but by sending the message from the launch control center, or if you will, if you wanted to, from the airborne command center, and be able to provide that kind of information to the missile.

And the sensitivity of operational targeting programs, unlike hardware, if you make a mistake in a software generation program, it isnâ€™t just in one missile; itâ€™s everywhere. And so when you make a mistake in software - so the validation and verification of missile targeting software by testing and running, because inside that software is a simulation of the airborne computer. And if that turns out not to be absolutely perfect, then the answer you get is not going to work. So itâ€™s really pretty important that verification and validation of software in that case be done.

Interviewer:

It mustâ€™ve been a stressful job making sure that everything was -

James Dalton:

Well, I thought it was a great job; I just loved it. I mean it was - well, we were doing some cutting-edge stuff, right? It was susceptible - when I went to Air Command Staff, the paper I wrote was â€œMinuteman strategic flexibility through advanced targeting techniques.â€ I knew probably about as much as anybody in blue-suit uniform about operational targeting development and how it could be made so much more effective. And it did get - you know, there were a lot of resistance to making it more flexible in some places that I went. But I did get - I did I think eventually get \$400,000.00 to write an RFP, and have some advanced random access - not serial machine - random access computers, you know.

Interviewer:

Whatâ€™s an RFP, sir?

James Dalton:

Request For Proposal.

Interviewer:

Okay.

James Dalton:

So I had actually picked two teams to compete to develop advanced targeting programs.

Interviewer:

Okay.

James Dalton:

And then I went off to school and left it.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. And so after this, then what was your next assignment?

James Dalton:

Well, after Command and Staff, as I said, the war was on, and so I went to C-130 School, trained on a C-130, and then went to Okinawa, and flew in Southeast Asia for - that was on accompany tour. Stephanie was six months old, my son was four years old, and I was gone

217 days the first year on this accompany tour in Okinawa, while they lived in 900-square-foot house in an Okinawa neighborhood. And so I flew in Vietnam, in the airlift business, in the para-drop business, in the resupply business, and then in Laos, and later a little bit in North Vietnam at night, lighting up the roads. The 130 that we had was equipped with 240 Mark-24 flares, and we could go out and run fighter strikes on the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. And later, in Package I, if you're familiar with the break-up of Vietnam. The last Southern part of North Vietnam, we did some operations there, although that came a little later.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. So -

James Dalton:

Then I came back. After two and a half years, I came back to the R&D business in the Pentagon, in the DCS R&D in the Air Staff, and that was to be the program element monitor on the Advanced ICBM Technology Program, which was development of new guidance, development of new launch techniques, and so on, for what would become the MX missile.

Interviewer:

Okay. Did you work on the Minuteman III missile?

James Dalton:

No, not when I - Minuteman III came later.

Interviewer:

Okay.

James Dalton:

Yeah. I was working Minuteman, the original Minuteman. Atlas, Titan, and the inertially-guided Titan, Titan II.

Interviewer:

Now, what was the difference between doing operational career path versus research and development career path?

James Dalton:

Well, the war really had that impact, that having gone from Air Command and Staff into the operational career field, then back to the R&D field, it seemed to me that I sort of had two options working for me. But I got promoted - I had gotten promoted below the zone to Major, Lieutenant Colonel, and Colonel, so I'd gotten to Colonel in a big, big hurry. My date of rank as a Colonel was like November of 1968, 14 years after I left here, which is by any stretch of the imagination getting places in a hurry. And so you're kind of in demand. People I worked for came looking for me, and I was at ICAF as a student, again writing a paper called "The nature of strategic arms control in an era of proliferation." Well, that got the attention of the Assistant to the Chairman. I had an interview.

He said, "I have 20 minutes for you," so I went in to talk to him, and I was there 2 hours. The next thing you know, when I graduated, I got assigned to the Chairman's office.

Interviewer:

And what did you do in that job?

James Dalton:

At JCS. Well, I worked on development of the U.S. position for SALT, on the inter-agency papers, and I went to the negotiating site and part of the delegation, to assist my boss, who was an Air Force three-star General.

Interviewer:

What was that like? That must've been fascinating.

James Dalton:

That was really interesting, yeah. The whole process is interesting, and it's not just the external process of the negotiating with the Soviets. It's the internal government process of negotiating with the State Department, the Arms Control and Disarmament

Agency, the CIA, you know, DIA, NPIC, all these places that had an interest. So there was a lot of tussling about what the U.S. position should be, and not everybody agreed on what it should be. And I'd be in a lot of those meetings, foot notting for the JCS, which usually would get people turned around. They don't like to see foot - they will not let you have your view until you footnote it. Then they start reading the footnote and realize maybe they'd better agree to what it was you wanted in the first place, rather than face up to this footnote, which I learned that very quickly in that business. So yeah, we - I negotiated until we finally settled it. And if you go back and look at SALT, you'll find - interesting. The ABM agreement - remember, we were going to build Safeguard. We were pouring concrete. We were doing, going to build Safeguard. The ABM agreement was a treaty, which I think was really the goal of the Soviets, and we were not willing to sign that without an offensive agreement. But if you look at that, you'll find that's called an interim offensive agreement, whereas the ABM treaty was, you know, ABM is space, and radar power levels, and all sorts of detail.

Interviewer:

What is Safeguard?

James Dalton:

Safeguard was going to be the ballistic missile defense system that the U.S. was going to employ. It was run by an Army General, the program. I forget his name, but he'd been around a long while. And that was - it was pretty clear, I think, that they were doing what they could to stop that program. Because they had made this big - think of that - they had made a big investment in ICBMs. Now we've - it's sort of a little like the Star Wars thing. Star Wars threatened that huge investment that they'd made, because it could handle the attack, at least as envisioned. They sort of believed that if we really set our mind to it - "These guys put people on the moon. These people set their mind to it, they're just liable to build something that's going to negate this great investment we've made." So I think they were - that was sort of the view I think they took of Safeguard, which was, "This may be a very effective missile defense system the U.S. is putting in there."

Interviewer:

Out of all the agencies you mentioned, to include the Soviets, who was the most challenging to negotiate with?

James Dalton:

Probably the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, you know. I don't think almost anybody understood how hard it was to get where we were in the ICBM business, and how much time, money, and energy we've invested in it. And it's very easy with a pencil to agree to give something away that you have no feel for. So I think you always have to worry about any negotiation; you have to worry about the players on your side becoming more interested in the ink on the paper - if you will, "We got an agreement" - than walking away from a bad agreement. I mean there is a psychology, I think, of people who are involved, particularly - this took a couple of years. A lot of time, people away. A lot of the same people brought their wives with them. Paul Nitza is an example, Gerry Smith, who headed the delegation, my boss, took their wives to Helsinki.

We negotiated in Helsinki and Vienna, and alternated. And so there's I think a little bit of tendency that you have to think about. People begin to see that signing the agreement is a very important critical goal and everything. Well, and the fact is, it really only is if it makes sense. You know the old saying, which is really true: no agreement is better than a bad agreement. And I think that's true, and it's hard for a lot of people to overcome that when they put that signing the agreement is the measure of the merit of all the work that they've put in it.

Interviewer:

Who is your boss at this time?

James Dalton:

My boss is a guy named Roy Allison. He was an Air Force three-star General.

Interviewer:

All right. And how was it dealing with the Soviets?

James Dalton:

It was interesting. A couple interesting things I thought came out of it. My impression based on the - normally, you have a plenary session. They're sitting on their side of the table, we're sitting on ours. We have a schedule of things we're going to talk about. They talk about their views of it, we talk about our views of it. Then the thing breaks up, and everybody goes in another room, gets a glass of wine, they break into little groups, little groups. I came over to the - first of all, we know they're programmed, because even in small groups, they'd always ask the same question. Everybody was asking the same, so we know they were programmed for that. It was also interesting - so you could sort of tell that the military, Soviet military involvement, were not telling the Foreign Ministry people what their force structure looked like. The military knew what the force structure was, but it was pretty clear to me that the Foreign Ministry people, maybe other than the Ambassador, really didn't know what the force structures looked like.

So we'd talk about force structure issues - silos, counting, size - the military knew that we knew what we were talking about, but Foreign Ministry guys, they were programmed, and they didn't really get it. So you know, it took a while. It took a couple of - I did that for two years, so. And then the agreement over, and then that sort of was - then somebody came looking for me to be a Vice Commander of a Wing, and so that was sort of, I think, probably the point in which the career pattern changed from Research and Development to Operations. And somebody that I had worked for in Okinawa came looking for me to be a Vice Wing Commander, and the four-star said, "Yeah, we'll take this guy, but we're going to send him to another Wing where we need it to be fixed. Fix it." You know, one of those. "Go out there and fix it." Yeah, okay - fix it.

So a Brigadier General and I went up to McGuire to "fix it."

Interviewer:

And what did you have to fix?

James Dalton:

Well, they'd had a lot of problems. The IG had been tough on them. There was an interesting lesson I learned. When we got there, I was Vice Commander. The Commander said, "You're in charge of all the open findings from the IG inspection." I think there were 104, something like that. I looked at it and said, "Well - this is a lesson in management, I think. I said, "How am I going to do that?" So I wrote to the - the Director of Operations had a bunch, the Air Base Group Commander had a bunch, the Director of Logistics had a bunch. So I sent messages. "I want the name of the lowest-ranking person in your organization that can solve 104, 89, whatever it was. So I got a whole list of names back. I wrote each of them a letter and said, "Here's a five-page outline of a briefing I want you to give me on how you're going to solve this finding." And so starting at like 6:00 in the morning at the Wing Headquarters, I'd have them come in, give me their five-page briefing.

If it didn't have a closed-loop solution - you know, it's one of these things that gets undamped, and somebody says, "Well, we brought it back to zero." "Yeah, but the things that let it get away never got changed, so all it's going to do is start going off the chart again. So no, go back and fix that chart, and then come back to me." So I got them all assigned. I had line I liked to say, you know, like, "Sergeant Garcia, when I see DO-34, it's going to see it right cross the front of your uniform. And if DO-34 gets solved, you're going to get the credit, and if DO-34 doesn't get solved, you're going to get the credit." And then I had a list of these names, and I would randomly pick one out, get in the staff car, and drive down to his place of work, go in the parachute shop. "Where's Sergeant Garcia?" "Well, he's in the back." "Hey, Garcia - did we get that?" "Yes sir, here's what happened. So we got it fixed." Bottom line is the IG comes back - not one of the 104 was a repeat finding - not one.

Interviewer:

That mustâ€™ve been a tremendous success.

James Dalton:

Yeah, and I wound up having to go brief - there were seven repeat findings, and normally the Wing Commander got sent to do it, but they sent me, the Vice Commander, to brief this four-star General, which is another whole experience. But when I got through with the briefings, I said, â€œCan I show you one more chart?â€ and he said, â€œOkay.â€ So I said, â€œLet me tell you what we found when we got there. Here are the 104. Hereâ€™s what we did. When I briefed you - the seven I briefed you on today, not one of them is in this 104. The seven I briefed you on today were closed by this headquarters and 21st Air Force before General Wentsch and I ever got there, and hereâ€™s how we did it,â€ and I told him. I think they made it a regulation that thereâ€™d be these kind of assignments. but when you think about delegating, somebody thought, you canâ€™t solve 104, but you can find a way to solve 104.

Well, so the meetingâ€™s over, and he says, â€œCome in here and see me. Iâ€™m going to make you a Wing Commander and send you.â€ Thatâ€™s how I got to be a Wing Commander. I think he knew that before I got there, but. So I went off to be a Wing Commander.

Interviewer:

Down in Florida, correct?

James Dalton:

In Florida, 39th Rescue Wing, which is another management challenge. 21 operating Units, every Air Force Rescue Unit from Tullahoma to Panama, Elmendorf to Aviano, Italy. Every rescue unit in Europe, United States, Greenland, Iceland, and Panama.

Interviewer:

And so what is a Rescue Unit?

James Dalton:

Rescue Unit, depends on the site. Some of them have C-130s and HH-53s, the big helicopters. Some of the base Rescue things have Huey helicopters. We did a lot of different things. We covered all the space launches from Patrick. We covered all the drone engagements and recovery, midair recovery at Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida. We provided stuff in Iceland to go out and in Greenland and these places. And so you have base local area rescue, but what we wound up doing was mainly saving civilians. Being called on in these local areas, whether it be snow trap, or at sea. We actually did one way off the coast where a tuna boat, somebody, his leg was severed by a cable, and we sent a 130 with a refuelable helicopter out with a doctor to get to him, you know. So we were saving, I think, close to 300 people a year; almost all of them were civilian.

But these are Para-Rescue guys, remember. These are the guys who go into the jungle and get the pilots out, or get the wounded people out, and whatever. So a lot of training goes on. But the thing I learned about that is Iâ€™m no better than the Commander on the ground. You canâ€™t run 21 Units if you donâ€™t have the right guy on the ground. And so I built a training program for prospective Commanders, so theyâ€™d come in and Iâ€™d get to talk to them, and they would get to meet the Maintenance people and the Aero people and all the rest of the people in the Wing Headquarters. But picking the Commander, Iâ€™d tell you, â€œIâ€™m not there. Youâ€™ve got to solve 95% of the problems yourself. If you donâ€™t, itâ€™s not going to work, because I canâ€™t have 21 Units sending me 20% of their problems apiece. It just doesnâ€™t work.â€

Interviewer:

So how did you train your subordinates, then, to take the initiative and be those kind of good leaders?

James Dalton:

Well, one of the things - and you probably see it in the Army, too - is if you look at a small flying Unit, you have Operations, where youâ€™ve got somebody who probably knows almost as much about flying as you do, over with the college graduate Pilots. And over

here, youâ€™ve got the Maintenance Facility, with the high school graduates, with NCOs, of which Pilots know very little. And I tell the Commander, â€œYou need to spend your time over where you are least comfortable, because you will not fail because the Pilots canâ€™t fly; if you fail, youâ€™ll fail because you canâ€™t generate the airframes for them to fly. So get uncomfortable. Get over there and learn about tech data compliance, supply levels, supply -â€œ Iâ€™d sort of tick off these things. â€œGet over there and learn that. If you do, that Major subordinate you have over here in your Op Shop, heâ€™ll pretty well take care of that. They donâ€™t need much help from you. Yeah, you can stop in, but donâ€™t sit there with your cup of coffee in the Op Shop. Get over in the Maintenance Shop.â€

So that sort of philosophical point of view. The same thing with young Aircraft Commanders, you know. You got a Huey helicopter. Weâ€™re not sending him to a big 10,000 foot runway. Weâ€™re sending him out in a part of the world he may never have seen before, with cables and circumstances. And I said, â€œWhatever happens, I do not want you - if you feel it exceeds your capability, I donâ€™t want you falling on the people youâ€™re trying to save.â€ These are young guys with maybe 500 hours in the Huey who now are going to be flying as Aircraft Commanders, and so I talked to every one of them on the phone that got upgraded. Said, â€œHere is - you know. Youâ€™re in charge of that crew. You may be friends with the copilot, but youâ€™re the guy who has to insist on professionalism. Donâ€™t let those personal relationships get in the way of insisting on a professional performance, because if you donâ€™t get it, you wonâ€™t get your job done.â€

Interviewer:

And what was your greatest success doing that very difficult mission?

James Dalton:

We won an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, this Wing. And despite the fact that we were flying into hazardous conditions and saving probably 300 people a year, I think - Iâ€™m probably not far off - we won the MAC Distinguished Wing Flying Safety Award 2 years in a row. So we were doing pretty well.

Interviewer:

What was your greatest challenge with this unit?

James Dalton:

The span of control; I mean thatâ€™s really what I was attacking. Oh, the other one - the other one I have to laugh when I think of this. I would send my team out - I had a team that I would send out to inspect my Units, and unlike the IG, I said, â€œIâ€™m only here to help, and weâ€™re glad to see you,â€ so that old gag line in the Air Force. I sent my team out to be very tough and through, and I remember the Maintenance guys saying, â€œWell, I donâ€™t know why weâ€™re doing that. What weâ€™re supposed to do,â€ he said, â€œis when IG inspects and finds all these things, then we go out and clean it up.â€ I said, â€œYou donâ€™t get it. We get there before the IG and he doesnâ€™t find anything. Thatâ€™s the way it works. Weâ€™ll be tougher than the IG is on your compliance with all the requirements and regulations and the rest of it, so when he gets there, it should be easy for you guys.â€ â€œOh. Okay.â€

â€œWeâ€™re going to follow the IG.â€ I said, â€œNo, no, no. You got it backwards. Weâ€™re not going to do that.â€

Interviewer:

That sounds like a fantastic philosophy. Did you sense that all your subordinates came on board with that mindset?

James Dalton:

Yeah, I think - to say itâ€™s patently obvious I guess maybe is an overstatement, but yeah. I mean, come on. Nothing succeeds like success, you know, and nobody wants to fail, so go through the process and get yourself in shape so that you can deal with the IG no matter what he does.

Interviewer:

So after this assignment, where did you go?

James Dalton:

Letâ€™s see.

Interviewer:

Is this about the time you went to Colorado?

James Dalton:

Oh, yeah. Well, this is, you knowâ€¦Iâ€™m going to tell you something that you may want to - we may want to look at this and think about it. I had 21 Units, and the Inspector General, the military, could only inspect so many at a time, and so theyâ€™d inspect a number, and then heâ€™d report back to the four-star. And what he reported upset the four-star General so much that Iâ€™m told I was probably on the top of his list to make Brigadier General. He took me off his list. And I said, â€œIâ€™d like equal time,â€ and well, if Iâ€™d go in there with all the details Iâ€™d get equal time. And I said, â€œI have his script that at first I was not very happy with.â€ And three months before, he came up to me and I happened to be up in the headquarters. He came in and said, â€œEverybody tells me youâ€™re the best Wing Commander in the Military Airlift Command.â€

Gee, really? Hmm. How about that? Three months later Iâ€™m in the doghouse because the IG has made these statements. And so I said, â€œWell, I want equal time,â€ and I got equal time. And I got General Chappie James, who was then the Vice Commander MAC. Said, â€œOkay, Jim,â€ heâ€™d seen my wing. The four-star had never been to my Wing, but James had been. Said, â€œOkay,â€ and so I gave this briefing. I said, â€œIâ€™m going to read from his script and tell you what he said. Then Iâ€™m going to show you the reports that he claimed he took this from, and you decide.â€ Without going into all the gory details, by the time that meeting took that under that was over, and the IG representative said some really dumb stuff, got himself in trouble, particularly telling me that they thought people should know something. And I said, â€œItâ€™s interesting - you think they should, but the Air Force Manual tells you that youâ€™re testing them on the wrong part of the manual you know, that just - that was one of the points that did not go well.

He called me in his office, he said, â€œJim, come on in here.â€ He called his secretary, â€œGet the IG on the phone.â€ â€œDonâ€™t make another out-briefing. Donâ€™t make anything. Get back here.â€ And then the next thing you know, this guy was out of the Air Force.

Interviewer:

For making false statements, or?

James Dalton:

For not reporting accurately. Gone - Brigadier General. â€œThanks for your service.

Retire.â€ Gone. And so out of the blue, the four-star calls me up, and he said, â€œHey, Lucky, how you doing?â€ I said, â€œI thought I was doing all right.â€ â€œWell, youâ€™re going out to be the Commander of the Air Reserve Personnel Center.â€ I had never heard of it. I said, â€œWhat?â€ He said, â€œIn Denver, God damn it.â€ â€œYes sir.â€ And so out of the blue, I go from being Wing Commander to being Commander of the Air Reserve Personnel Center in Denver. â€œFix it.â€ Another one of those. I go to see the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel in the Air Force and said, â€œThere were five Wing Commanders moving this summer, and I picked you out to go out and fix this place.â€ Another fix-it. There was a lot of that.

Interviewer:

What had to be fixed with this one?

James Dalton:

I think the service to the Reservists and everything. I mean what Iâ€™m going to tell you sounds simple and obvious on the surface, but didnâ€™t happen. Reservists, rather than making a long-distance call to our expenditure would wait till they served their weekend, then theyâ€™d get on the Autovon and make their call. I put in a toll-free line. They could call up any time, 24 hours a day, and leave a recording and say, â€œHereâ€™s what

lâ€™m worried about.â€ And then the worker we had would get his records, have it all laid out, and call him back and solve it. Instead of letter-writing - heâ€™d write a letter and ask a question, heâ€™d get a letter in answer that raises another question, write another letter. You know, it was just inefficient.

Interviewer:

So this was a place where you could take care of your Air Force personnel in a much better way.

James Dalton:

Absolutely. Solve it much quicker, a happier Reservist, you know. I mean the Air Force Reserve is a big part of the Air Force. It has a lot of first-rate airplanes, a lot of first-rate people, and they should get treated that way.

Interviewer:

Right. Did you notice any change in retention over the long haul after you instigated the change?

James Dalton:

I didnâ€™t look. I really didnâ€™t look at retention. Actually, Ron Fogleman, who was later Chief of Staff of the Air Force, a Lieutenant Colonel, worked with me. And heâ€™d go out on weekends to the fighter bases and talk with the Reservists and everything. He knew them very well. But that didnâ€™t last long. I was there 15 months, maybe, something like that.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. And then whereâ€™d you go after that?

James Dalton:

Well, the four-star wanted me to come back to MAC Headquarters as the Inspector General, it turned out. Or as I would say, god got a little integrity at last. But somebody in the Pentagon wanted me, somebody lâ€™d gone to school with said, â€œI really want him.â€ And so I went, became the Deputy Director of Concepts for the Air Force. But that didnâ€™t last very long, â€˜cause then I went to the Joint Staff, and as I said, never came back, because I went in, I donâ€™t know, â€™77, and eight years later, I hadnâ€™t been back in the Air Force, in a pure Air Force job.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. And so whatâ€™d you do on the Joint Staff?

James Dalton:

Well, I went down first as the Deputy Director for Force Development and Strategic Plans in J-5 for a year. Then I was promoted to two stars, went to become the Vice Director of the Joint Staff for two years. The Chairman, General Jones, wanted me to be the Director, but the Navy had one more year in the job, and so they said, â€œWell, we have to find another assignment for you for a year.â€ And so I went to ICAF as a Commandant.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. And what is ICAF?

James Dalton:

The Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

Interviewer:

And thatâ€™s where you had been a student there.

James Dalton:

I had been a student there.

Interviewer:

Previously. And how was that assignment?

James Dalton:

It was fine. It was a lot easier than a lot of the jobs lâ€™ve had. But General Jones sent me there to change the curriculum, redesign it, which I did. They were working a four-five week; you know, four days one week, five days the next, not working very hard, and I thought we had too much smart talent, we ought to be putting it to work. And so I

redesigned the curriculum to five days, which is another whole story I don't want to get into about thinking I had been assured I could do that, and then having somebody tell me, "You're not going to do it." And I said, "Well, that's fine. I will write a letter to the Chairman and send it through you." And when I showed him the letter, he said, "Okay, I give up," basically. He was my boss that was trying to block what I was trying to do, and I said, "The Chairman sent me here to do it. You agreed to it. I've done it, and now you're not agreeing."

"So I'm just letting the Chairman know." Nobody likes to be told they're going to be put on report to the Chairman, so that sort of ended that.

Interviewer:

So the theme that I'm picking up on is that you do a lot of innovation, a lot of fixing problems, a lot of -

James Dalton:

Problem-solving.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

James Dalton:

Problem-solving.

Interviewer:

Where did that - how did that become part of who you are? Has that always been part of your -

James Dalton:

I don't know. That's really a good question. I think when you get confronted with these things - I mean the 104 thing, I mean is it how am I going to solve 104? Well, the only way I can solve it turns out I just got 104 people in a Wing of 5,000 people or whatever to focus on the issues. I don't know where it comes from for sure. I mean it just - when you fly airplanes - I mean I've had engines blow up on takeoff, you know, you have things happen. You don't want to get in a big hurry. You don't want hands shutting down engines that are fine, which happens in cases. I've no - people move too quickly, you know. You just have to take a deep breath and slow down. I watched an interesting technique, General Jones at the Chairmen. I guess I don't know where we were.

We were working the shoot-down of the two Libyan airplanes I guess was it. And he just lowered his voice, and everybody, it gets very quiet to listen, and everything settles down. When people start shouting and yelling in command centers or something, that's out of control. Things are going to happen that shouldn't happen. And so I trained the contingency support staff at McGuire when I was the Vice Commander, while we're bringing them in on Saturdays and going over the war plans that we might be asked to execute, and then putting them on viewgraph so you know. A lot of them have hooks in them, said, "If you can't deploy this by this time, deploy it over here," and you've got to really be sensitive to the issues that are in there. Or as I would say, "What are the make-or-break issues that are important?" But I think - I don't know. Maybe I just got confronted by problems over time and had to find a technique.

You know it seems to me that - and this is true in government today, and I think it's a problem that is not getting addressed, which is you have to lay out alternative courses of action, and you have to lay out potential solutions, and the pros and cons of each.

That's really what the National Security Council Staff's job is for the President. Here's the issue. Here's the possible courses of action. Here are the pros and cons of each issue. What do you want to do? What more can we resource? What more information do you need? What do we need to do? I mean just to be blunt, I don't see that happening today.

Interviewer:

But that seems like such basic Staff work -

James Dalton:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

That you would do in the orders process.

James Dalton:

Yeah. Right. But. But. We don't need opinions. We'd like - you know the old saying, everybody's entitled to his own opinion but not his own facts. But I don't know, problem-solving is - same thing when I went into industry, when I got out of the Air Force. What are the make-or-break issues in this organization that we really need to work on? Am I really spending my time on the things that are critical to getting this job done, this mission done, or am I spending them on things where I'm comfortable? You know that's the danger of the Commander is gee, I'm so comfortable over in the Ops Shop with a cup of coffee, it's so nice here. That's not where you need to be. You need to be over in the Maintenance thing, finding out how that all works, who's doing what.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. So what lessons would you give young leaders today to make them successful?

James Dalton:

Well, one of the things we haven't talked about I think in leadership is people. You know I used to say, "Once you get by the one-man job, everything you get done you're going to get done through people." If you don't like people, basically - I mean if you really don't care for dealing with people - you're really going to have a problem being an effective leader. And leaders can - you've seen every kind of leadership style. There's a very senior guy in the Pentagon - I guess he's no longer with us - who was an Ambassador at one time, a pretty famous guy. And I went to a meeting one day with him up in the Secretary of Defense's conference room, and I forget what we were talking about. One of his guys said something, and he just shredded him in this meeting. And so the meeting was over, and I knew him real well. So I said, "Let me talk to you for a minute," the head guy, and I said, "I didn't know he was leaving."

"Well, what do you mean? He's not leaving." "Oh, he must be leaving. I mean surely you wouldn't talk to him like that unless he was leaving." I said, "You know what, when you're driving toward the cliff in the car, he's not going to say a word. You just lost him today. You'd better go see if you can find a way to repair the damage." But that was the message to him is just how he treated him, you know, and this guy was the number three guy in the Pentagon at the time. So people - everything you get done through people. They motivate differently. They like clear guidance. They like responsibility. Give them the job, don't tell them how to do it, unless you think they need some extra guidance or something. I mean people make everything happen, and that I think is whether it's in a flying organization, whether it's in industry, or wherever you go.

Interviewer:

So what I'm hearing is that you can be tough and exacting on standards while still maintaining the dignity and respect to people -

James Dalton:

Right.

Interviewer:

And that's how you get a good result.

James Dalton:

Right. Yeah, you don't chew people out in public. I mean, you know, things they learn here - pretty basic. You don't do that. You'll find people that don't pay any attention to that. You know they get their ego in the way of what they're trying to do. That's another killer - ego kills. That's a saying I didn't have till I went to work in industry, where I had a lot of egos to deal with. But

Interviewer:

What industry did you go to after the Air Force?

James Dalton:

I went into the aerospace industry to run companies for Logicon Corporation. So I went out as the President of a company called Logicon RDA. I had 120 PhDs, 700 guys with master's degrees, I had all kinds of people. We kept buying companies, and I wound up running four companies in a group called the Defense Technology Group. And I did that for 13 years. We sold the company to Northrup in '97 for \$750 million, and they gave me a key personnel retention agreement, and I stayed on another 18 months and said, "That's enough. I don't want to do it anymore. That's it. I'm done."

Interviewer:

What was your favorite assignment, out of all these fabulous things that you've done?

James Dalton:

Director of the Joint Staff, easy, by far.

Interviewer:

Why?

James Dalton:

You're in a position to influence national policy. The stuff's important. Not everybody in Washington's going to agree with you; you've got to figure out who the players are. You've got - just think of it. A lot of people don't think. I think if you go to the org chart and take a look at it, the three-star director of the Joint Staff has five three-star Generals (or Admirals) working for him. No Service Chief has five three-star Generals working for him. But the three-star in the Joint Staff has five three-star Generals that he's writing report cards on, that work for him, and he works for the Chairman. He works for all the - now, because with Goldwater-Nichols he clearly works for the Chairman and the other members of the JCS. That's a great job. You get to work with the Chairman every day. You get to work the issues for him. You get to the point where he looks to you, you know, to come in and tell him.

I mean the first conversation I had with Jack Vessey was, "You don't know me very well and I don't know you, but I will tell you I'm going to tell you what I think, whether you like it or not." And he looked at me, he said, "If you didn't, it'd be dereliction of duty." "Yep." So that's the kind of relationship that you want; you want to be able to tell the Chairman exactly what you think, and what you think is the right way, and then he gets to decide. Then you execute it.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Another question about education. You did a lot of science and math.

James Dalton:

Right.

Interviewer:

What do you think the state of STEM in current classrooms is?

James Dalton:

I think in some places it works real well. One of the things - I mean the only thing I guess I do pro bono is I'm the chairman of the board of the National Defense Industrial Association chapter in Los Angeles, and we put money into STEM. Northrup Grumman puts money into STEM. A lot of the big companies. I don't think they can find the talent they're looking for in the numbers they'd like to have.

Interviewer:

Why is that?

James Dalton:

Well, I don't think the kids are getting the message. At Brooklyn Tech - we're going to go down to Brooklyn Tech - in fact, I've got to be sure to call her. Interesting statistics. Of the entrance exam schools in New York City today, which are Bronx Science, Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Tech, and a couple of other new ones that I'm not that familiar with, 74% of the students are Asian American - 74%. And the answer I think is 'cause somebody in their family knows where education sits in the realm of importance.

Somebody knows that technology is important, and these kids are into the technology, and into the computers, and into that. And somebody has explained to them, "There's a future for you in this thing." I think in too many families, there's nobody providing the sense of direction.

My dad didn't go to college. My mother didn't go to college. I'm the first one in my family, extended family, that graduated from college, that went, even before I came here, that I was going to college. And I think that they don't understand that we're becoming very highly technical as a society. That service business is big business, not just hardware. And that the things that people did years ago - when I was a kid, a guy with a shovel could support a family. If he can't work a bulldozer or something like that now, who needs him? So this separation that we read a lot about in the papers, the inequality and everything, I think in part is generated by the fact that the kind of jobs that you have to require the education that you get, and if you don't get that, you're not going to play. I don't think that message has gotten through to a large part of the population. I think there are a lot of single parents.

It's a tough row for the single parents that raise kids to provide the guidance and everything else. I think all those kind of demographic things have an effect on what happens. And a lot of the big companies will tell you they can't find enough of the qualified people. It isn't that the jobs aren't there. They can't find qualified people for the jobs.

Interviewer:

And so the lesson is that to do well in the technologies, science, math, engineering -

James Dalton:

Right.

Interviewer:

And come up through school doing it.

James Dalton:

Yeah. I mean it's wonderful to be a history professional, but gee, how many history teachers do we need? Where's your future? And so you go down the list, number one is petroleum engineer - start going down the list of college graduates and the kind of jobs they can get. I was just looking at one the other day. It's clear that technology and science is driving the train. Now, does that make the arts less important? No. But that's something you can do while you're making a living doing something else. I don't know.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. The final question, then, for you, is that our new barracks here at West Point is going to be the Benjamin O. Davis Barracks. West Point is recognizing a General who served in the Air Force.

James Dalton:

Shall I tell you a quick story?

Interviewer:

Please.

James Dalton:

Some years ago, our class president sent a note out saying, "West Point is going to have this Distinguished Graduate program, and we're interested in suggesting names." And I wrote a letter back and said, "You should recognize Benjamin O. Davis for what he put up with at West Point for four years in being silenced." That was my input as far as I know that through the class led to the Benjamin O. Davis Distinguished Graduate Award. So you know, yeah, I think it's absolutely what should've been; I thought about it a long time ago, but they weren't paying attention.

Interviewer:

Did you ever have a chance to serve with General Davis?

James Dalton:

No, but I knew Chappie James pretty well. Chappie James was instrumental in my making Brigadier General, because he was the one that I had to brief on the IG thing. Heâ€™s the one that took the initiative and carried the ball and said, â€œThis was wrong, what happened.â€ And I will tell you a quick story, since heâ€™s not around anymore. Iâ€™m down in Denver running the Air Reserve Personnel Center, so we go down to the Air Force Academy to football games, and he sees me and said, â€œJim, I need to talk to you a minute.â€ He promised me when I left he would take care of it - promised me - meaning the four-star - promised me he would take care of it. So Iâ€™m sitting at home one night and the phone rings, and the guy says, â€œGeneral James is calling you from Alaska.â€ And I get on the phone and he said, â€œJim, the list is coming out tomorrow, and youâ€™re on it.â€ Thatâ€™s how I knew I had made Brigadier General. He called me the night before to tell me the list was coming out, and I was going to be on it.

So you never know. You never know whatâ€™s going to happen. Somebody said, â€œels that how you make four-star General?â€ I said, â€œItâ€™s a ten reel slot machine.â€ Youâ€™ve got to have a good job. Youâ€™ve got to do a good job. Youâ€™ve got to work for somebody who appreciates it. They know how to write. You know, go down the list. It takes a ten reel slot machine. I told somebody the best piece of advice I got at West Point the whole time I was here from somebody whose name I do not remember in the theater was â€œSeek responsibility and do the job, and let the system take care of the rest.â€¹ That would be my advice to cadets. Seek responsibility and do the job, and let the system take care of the rest.

Interviewer:

Sir, and it sounds like that worked very well for you.

James Dalton:

Worked for me. Worked for me. A lot of jobs I got, people came looking for me that Iâ€™d worked for before.

Interviewer:

Because you did so well and put all your effort into it.

James Dalton:

Tell you, they came looking for me. Yep.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Well, sir, thank you very much. Itâ€™s been an honor and a privilege to speak with you, and thank you for coming back here to your alma mater.

James Dalton:

Well, Iâ€™m happy to be here to take everybody around and see the place I spent a little bit of time. Not too bad, I used to say, for a Cadet Sergeant. Carried a rifle for four years. Always remember that when you go out the front gate, itâ€™s a new game. Donâ€™t let - Iâ€™ve seen a lot of guys not quite able to overcome their status as a Cadet versus what happens later. Gee whiz, what happened, you know? I donâ€™t know what happened.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

James Dalton:

All I know is the game was different.

Interviewer:

Well, thank you very much, sir.

James Dalton:

Okay.

Interviewer:

All right.