

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Thomas O. Blakeney

COLLECTION: 4700.0181

IDENTIFICATION: Colonel in United States Army, commandant of LSU ROTC cadet corps

INTERVIEWER: Ruth Thompson Carville

SERIES: University History – Ole War Skule

INTERVIEW DATE(S): October 1, 1992; October 6, 1992

FOCUS DATES: 1930s-1969

ABSTRACT:

Tape 254

Family background; life as child in Stephenville, Texas; early influences; early educational background; high school life; decision to attend LSU; gets job as laundry worker on campus; begins work as a trainer for football team; mother encourages him to study medicine; joins Sigma Chi fraternity; lives in dormitory on campus; plays clarinet in LSU band; freshmen hazing at LSU; majors in zoology; involvement in ROTC; ROTC becomes Blakeney's favorite aspect of college life; joins army after graduation in 1939; marries in 1940; begins working at LSU in 1966 as commandant of the ROTC; memories of Chancellor Cecil Taylor; recollection of Dean of Student Services James Reddoch guarding flagpole after Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination; friendship with Dean of Men Arden French; ROTC becomes non-compulsory in 1968; controversy surrounding decision to make ROTC non-compulsory; opposition to compulsory ROTC by John McGuinness, editor of the *Reveille*.

Tape 255

Blakeney supports shaving the heads of incoming freshmen; effects of Vietnam War on ROTC cadets and campus life in general; ROTC enrollment decreases dramatically after it becomes non-compulsory; ROTC storage room set on fire as part of Vietnam War protests.

Tape 256

Early interest in the military; summer jobs as a teenager; assigned to Fort Knox, Kentucky in 1940; transferred to Camp Bowie, Texas and joins Seven-Sixtieth Tank Battalion; receives training in modern tanks at Fort Benning, Georgia and Camp Pickett, Virginia; ordered overseas for invasion of North Africa in 1942; engages in battle with Rommel's Afrika Corps; receives orders to invade Italy; lands in Italy near Naples; returns to U.S. and Fort Knox, Kentucky; participates in Task Force Frigid in Fairbanks, Alaska; involved in plane crash in Alaska; granted four months recuperation leave; re-stationed in Fort Knox, Kentucky; becomes instructor at

general staff college in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; attends Army War College in Pennsylvania; transferred to Heidelberg, Germany; joins faculty of U.S. Air War College in Montgomery, Alabama; accepts assignment in Vietnam; serves as head of Army Concepts Team in Saigon; returns to LSU in 1966.

TAPES: 3 (T254, T255, T256)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 2 hours

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 70 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None