

## RESUME OF SERVICE CAREER

of

**WILLIAM THOMAS RICE, Major General**

**DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH:** 13 June 1912, Hague, Virginia

**YEARS OF COMMISSIONED SERVICE:** Over 38 years

**DATE OF USAR RETIREMENT:** 12 June 1972

### **MILITARY SCHOOLS ATTENDED**

The Command and General Staff College

### **EDUCATIONAL DEGREES**

Virginia Polytechnic Institute - BS Degree - Civil Engineering

Stetson University - LLD Degree (Honorary) - Law

The Citadel - DMS Degree (Honorary) - Military Science

### **CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF DUTY ASSIGNMENTS**

<b><u>FROM</u></b>	<b><u>TO</u></b>	<b><u>ASSIGNMENT</u></b>
Apr 42	Apr 43	CO, Svc Co, 730 <sup>th</sup> Eng Bn (Rwy)
Apr 43	Dec 43	Director of Opns (Iran)
Dec 43	Aug 44	XO, 791 <sup>st</sup> Rwy Opn Bn
Sep 44	Jul 45	CO, 791 <sup>st</sup> Rwy Opn Bn
Aug 45	Nov 45	Supt of Trans, 3 <sup>rd</sup> MRS – Pacific
Nov 45	Jun 51	Member, Individual Ready Reserve
Dec 51	Sep 53	Dir of Trans, 5000 <sup>th</sup> GHQ-MRS
Sep 53	Jul 57	Dep CG, 5000 <sup>th</sup> GHQ-MRS
Aug 57	Dec 65	CG, 5000 <sup>th</sup> GHQ-MRS
Jan 66	Jul 69	IMA to DCSLOG, DA

### **PROMOTION**

### **DATE OF APPOINTMENT**

2LT	26 Jul	34
1LT	26 Aug	37
CPT	24 Oct	42
MAJ	26 Feb	44
LTC	23 Mar	45
COL	24 Jul	52
BG	8 Dec	54
MG	12 May	58

### **US DECORATIONS AND BADGES**

Legion of Merit w/2 Oak Leaf Clusters

Bronze Star Medal

**SOURCE OF COMMISSION** ROTC (VPI)



## INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

Interview with Major General (Ret) William T. Rice

Major- General (Ret) William T. Rice was interviewed by CPT Michael Boyle on 31 January and 15 February 1985. **MG RICE**, a graduate of Virginia Polytechnic University, entered active duty in 1942.

**MG RICE** saw duty in WWII in Iran, Japan, and the Philippines as part of the U.S. Railway Services. Dealing with local nationals in each country, utilizing at least initially, native equipment, he implemented rail services to the American/Allied military forces in the area.

The 730th Railway Operating Battalion was one of the rail units. As the others were formed, an American railway sponsored their training, and supplied key personnel to fill enlisted/NCO/officer slots.

In Iran, weather, terrain, and poor equipment resulted in many problems which were overcome slowly.

Japan proved to be a smooth, efficient operation resulting in no major problems.

In the Philippines, **MG RICE** stated that the natives and equipment were inadequate.

Overall, **MG RICE** ended with the comment that, in the case of a deployment necessitating the calling forward of the only railroad units (all reserves) while they might be technically proficient, there has been no military training involved recently, resulting in the inability of our own military to take control of a rail system as we did in WWII.

This is the Army Transportation Oral History Program interview conducted with MG (Ret) William T. Rice on 31 January 1985 by CPT Michael S. Boyle at **MG RICE's** office in Richmond, Virginia.

**CPT BOYLE:** General Rice, when the 730th Railway Operating Battalion was activated, did the sponsorship of the Military Railway Service by the civilian lines make a significant contribution to readiness?

**MG RICE:** Actually what happened, the 730th Railway Operating Battalion was sponsored by the then Pennsylvania Railroad. The commanding officer was the Chief Engineer of the railroad in Chicago, and those of us who held reserve commissions were given the opportunity to transfer to this company-sponsored organization. At that time, I was working for the Pennsylvania and along with the others that held reserve commissions, we were able to become a part of this unit.

**CPT BOYLE:** Did the Association of American Railroads have a formal policy to support the war effort as far as letting their personnel go?

**MG RICE:** There was a formal policy established, whereby various railroads sponsored these railway operating battalions. The officer personnel would come from a particular railroad usually one of the larger railroads of America. It was all a joint effort on the part of each of the major lines that were in sympathy with this reserve program to sponsor these battalions in the late 1930's. Many of us were Engineer Officers assigned to, what was then known as Engineer Organizations, which were Engineer units. The Transportation Corps had yet to be established.

**CPT BOYLE:** When you started forming with your battalion and the other units started training, did the amount of soldiers that were drawn from private industry affect the capabilities of private industry, or did you observe that phenomenon at all?

**MG RICE:** Not at that time. Many of the enlisted personnel who reported to our organization once we started our training program in the Summer of 1942 at Fort Wayne, Indiana, were non-railroad people. So actually, the railroads of America were not suffering at that time from lack of people.

**CPT BOYLE:** So, you had to basically form your own training program with the few experienced people you had when you started training your unit?

**MG RICE:** Correct. We did this by working with the railroad that sponsored us, the Pennsylvania. We were able to take our people out on the main line of that railroad, go into the offices where there were dispatchers, go out into the yards where there were operating personnel, on the track where there were maintenance people, and into the shops with the shop people. Our people actually worked beside the people of the Pennsylvania and learned what they could from them.

**CPT BOYLE:** As the training progressed, I know that first the officers went separately to training and then the unit as a whole got together for training. Do you think that you had adequate time to accomplish everything before being deployed?

**MG RICE:** The officers of my organization were called to active duty on April 9, 1942, and ordered to report to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, which was an Engineer post. We were given sort of a refresher course in Basic Training. Many of us were Reserve Officers who had been to ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] camps. In fact, many of us had attended military colleges. I was a graduate of Virginia Polytechnic University [VPI], and, we also had several Virginia Military Institute [VMI] graduates among us. At Fort Leonard Wood, our training was a rehash of what we had done at ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] camps years before. However, there were other officers who had never put the uniform on before. They had come directly from railroads. This created quite a problem in trying to bring them along fast enough so they would at least know something about how to wear the uniform, how to do a right and left face and give a hand salute prior to the arrival of the enlisted men.

**CPT BOYLE:** Do you think you had adequate time to train the officers in their stage?

**MG RICE:** We did not have adequate time to train the officer personnel who had no prior military training, and it continued on into the time when we were at Fort Wayne, Indiana. I remember so well, having to take the officers out behind the guardhouse early in the morning, and give them some basic instructions as to the things that an officer should know concerning military courtesy and discipline.

**CPT BOYLE:** As far as the enlisted members go, did they have enough time to get together in their units as far as headquarters units and the various line units and train as components

**MG RICE:** We did not ship out until November of 1942, and during that interim, we did have some good railroad men who had come into the service. They were most helpful, and I'm alluding to enlisted personnel, in training their comrades and colleagues. As a result, I would say we did have enough time to whip the unit into reasonable efficiency, considering the job that we had to do when we got overseas.

**CPT BOYLE:** When you deployed overseas to the Persian Gulf and you started developing personnel turnover, did you receive enough people for replacements from the United States to meet your personnel demands over there?

**MG RICE:** Generally speaking, the personnel that we received as replacements were not of the highest caliber. They were usually people who had been left behind for one reason or another, and then it had been determined that they should go ahead and be sent overseas. Frequently, they had absolutely no knowledge of railroading and our primary job was to find a position that they could fill that would not involve any technical skill.

**CPT BOYLE:** I see, so the replacements basically formed your common labor group, correct?

**MG RICE:** That is correct. We usually placed them in the Mess Hall or places like that, where they could perform the duty and release other personnel who did have a technical railroad skill.

**CPT BOYLE:** As far as facilities used for training before you deployed, do you think they were adequate for your unit?

**MG RICE:** Yes, the Pennsylvania Railroad was most cooperative in every respect. We were their unit and they had a pride of authorship there. They gave us every opportunity to learn everything we could on their property.

**CPT BOYLE:** Why are military railway units organized so differently from standard military regiments? I know they're organized in divisions. Does that follow a civilian concept?

**MG RICE:** They follow a civilian concept of a railway division. In our country a superintendent has control of the operation of a certain mileage of railroad. Under him he has various departments which are exactly the same as you have in a railway operating battalion.

**CPT BOYLE:** If one battalion is basically unique, what would its civilian equivalent be, one railway operating battalion?

**MG RICE:** A superintendent's division on the American railroads.

**CPT BOYLE:** Railway operating battalions in the Persian Gulf operated on an overextended basis throughout practically the whole Theater of Operations. Generally, what were your operational limits and how far over them did you go when you started operation?

**MG RICE:** We were operating between the ports and Tehran, and consequently, the railroad was divided into three segments. We had amazing types of problems; there were tunnels, the heat of the desert, as compared with the moderate temperatures up in the mountains. The line was divided into sections, so each one of the operating battalions would be able to operate approximately the same mileage considering the branch line that went to Khorramshahr, another one to Bandar- Shahpur, and the strain of the mountain terrain in with the tunnels. So, while the mileage or kilometers were not the same, the problem involved for moving trains were approximately the same.

**CPT BOYLE:** I know when the 730th first deployed, you had operational responsibility over some 289 miles of track and your TOE [Table of Organization and Equipment] only had the personnel to fulfill the obligations of 100-150 miles of track.

**MG RICE:** That is correct. Of course, the TOE is predicated on a theoretical number of trains per day, and actually, we were not operating that many trains. Our operating crews were sufficient to spread them over a longer length of railroad. But, the fact that the heat was so depressing and the motor power so inadequate, the old British WD [Wheel Drive] Steam Locomotive at that time had been under maintained, and all of them were in terrible shape, that until such time as we received the American diesels, the problems of operation were paramount. Consequently, it was necessary that a third battalion be formed from a nucleus of each of the two existing battalions. We put in a middle division of this railroad so there could be closer supervision on the part of the officer personnel. In addition, the creation of the middle division would help us get new personnel who would fill in the vacancies and help reduce the load of the two existing units.

**CPT BOYLE:** Did you receive more personnel from the United States to do this?

**MG RICE:** Yes, we had some enlisted personnel who came over from the United States. We had certain housekeeping personnel transferred to our units from the existing Headquarters of the Persian Gulf Command, and we took officer personnel from the two

existing units and usually prorated them when they were efficient in their work to take on the additional responsibility of running the new unit, which was known as the 791st.

**CPT BOYLE:** When they formed the 791st, they also converted from the 702nd Railway Grand Division to the 3rd Military Railway Service. What were the reasons behind this?

**MG RICE:** We had a Railway Grand Division when we first went over there under command of COL [Colonel] Arthur E. Stoddard, who had come from the Union Pacific Railway. It was felt that the job at hand, the job to be done, was of such magnitude that it deserved a higher position insofar as Army TOEs [Table of Organization and Equipment] are concerned. Consequently, at that time I was a Company Commander and, of course, I was not in on any of these decisions, but the rumor had it that it was determined that this was important enough to be commanded by a Military Railway Service, and apparently the Department of the Army agreed.

**CPT BOYLE:** It was also mentioned in some of the monographs that the Army really was trying to get a General Officer over in charge of the Military Railway Service because the Soviets and the British Army both had General Officers and that was causing some problems early in the initial operations.

**MG RICE:** That could well have been. Those of us who were many slots below that of the top command were not familiar with those conversations or those conferences. Consequently, I cannot speak to that, but I presume, and from what I have later learned and what I had to do regarding conferences with the Russians and British, that makes sense.

**CPT BOYLE:** When you started operations, you had a lot of problems not only with the railway operations but also with communications, and I know that there was one signal platoon assigned to each railway operating battalion. Was this really enough communications personnel to establish adequate communications for you?

**MG RICE:** No, definitely not. The communications along the railroad lines, while they did exist, were so inadequate for the job to be done, that we had to call upon the signal troops. They were there with other units to assist in supplementing an already outmoded communication system and inadequate personnel.

**CPT BOYLE:** When you first arrived with the 730th, you were in charge of A Company, weren't you?

**MG RICE:** No. I was in charge of Headquarters and Service Company.

**CPT BOYLE:** Headquarters and Service Company? What were your basic roles and responsibilities?

**MG RICE:** That company contained the personnel that did the train dispatching and the housekeeping for the general headquarters personnel who worked in the battalion

headquarters. But, primarily, we were at the operation end and the technical end of both the train dispatching, signaling, and block operations.

**CPT BOYLE:** Since the Iranian Railroad, built by the Germans, had a manual block system, do you think you had enough dispatchers and trained personnel initially to successfully take over operations?

**MG RICE:** We trained them very rapidly in the States and because of the simplicity of the operation there, we had sufficient people.

**CPT BOYLE:** When you arrived, I'm sure that the first thing you noticed was the difference in climatic conditions between the United States and Iran? What were some of the more severe climatic problems that you encountered in Iran?

**MG RICE:** We had many of them. There were the physical problems of keeping personnel working when they were covered with prickly heat. We also had to avoid personnel overheating and suffering a heat stroke. In addition, we had many problems with the railroad as a result of the extreme heat. The steam locomotives were, as I have said, the old British WD-type that failed constantly. Later on, we got the American diesel. Well, the heat was so great that the American diesel would fail also as a result of overheating of the engine, what we call a blow-by, wherein we would have a motor that would fail. Later, we decided to put additional radiator capacity on the diesels, a desert cooler as we called it, made of grass and a wire container, whereby the water would drip through it and would cool with the air. That cool air would tend to keep the temperature of the diesel engine below the temperature it would normally be in the extreme heat. We also had buckled track as a result of the heat and the problem of keeping the natives working was also extremely difficult. I would say the main problem as a result of the heat was the problem of personnel. We had to try to keep them well enough to work long hours and withstand the tremendous adjustment from the normal American climate to that devastated desert. We also had the problem of having sufficient drinking water and having sufficient number of salt tablets to enable them to carry on. Now the British, they always took their afternoon siesta and you wouldn't find any of them from about 1100 until 1600 hours. But the Americans were different, we tried to work through the day, heat and all, and we had many physical failures. But, all in all, we carried on.

**CPT BOYLE:** Did you ever have any messing problems or medical problems, of the personnel, because of the distance you were spread out, as far as feeding them every day?

**MG RICE:** Yes, we had considerable problems in the mountains when I was with the 791st Railway Operating Battalion which operated that section running from Andimeshk to the north. It meant that they would leave the desert where these tremendous temperatures were experienced and be on a locomotive grinding up through the tunnels and mountains for the next few hours. Our big problem was to keep these men awake because of the change in temperature as you reached the higher altitudes, plus physical

exhaustion would cause many of the operating people to fall asleep; with the boring whine of the diesel locomotive as it crawled its way up these 1-1/2% grades. Some of them even told me that it was necessary that they light a cigarette when they left one station. When it burned down to where it burned their lips, it would wake them up, which was one of their precautions, to be sure they didn't go through the next station. Consequently, it was necessary for us to establish a mid-point mess and rest location, whereby they would be allowed to detrain, eat and sleep, and a relief crew would carry the train on to the next terminal.

**CPT BOYLE:** Under these extreme conditions, I know a lot of natural disasters happen. Do you feel that your training adequately prepared you to handle these type things as far as snow slides and rock slides?

**MG RICE:** We had officer personnel who were quite competent and had worked for several years on American Railroads in each one of the technical skills that were required. For instance, I had been a track supervisor on the Pennsylvania Railroad; and rock slides and movement of all types of heavy impedimenta through a difficult section of railroad was nothing new as far as I personally was concerned. We had other officers who had experienced equal civilian work and who were graduate Engineers, and we had no problem there because we had the people who knew how to do the job and who could direct the enlisted personnel. So, from the standpoint of technical skills, we were quite fortunate.

**CPT BOYLE:** When the Corps of Engineers was converted to the Transportation Corps, did the Transportation Corps assume all the repair-of-way functions, or did the Corps of Engineers help you with additional major construction?

**MG RICE:** There were times when we had to call on the Corps of Engineers to supplement what we had, due to lack of personnel, but normally speaking, unless there was a big bridge or something of that kind, we were able to maintain our right-of-way ourselves, with the help of the natives. We used considerable native work in the maintenance of track under the supervision of American enlisted personnel.

**CPT BOYLE:** You mentioned before that the rails were quite light in weight of construction. Did you take any special measures to prevent damage or rail burn, or did you replace the rail with a heavier weight?

**MG RICE:** The railroad itself was relatively new, but the weight of the rail was such that the strength, of course, was not what it would have been here in America. Consequently, we had to be careful that we didn't have buckled track. We had to be careful of heavy wheel loads of our big American freight cars, which are so much heavier than those used by the natives in that part of the world. We did have difficulty with diesels slipping down and burning the rail and creating a problem. In fact, we had one instance where a diesel slipped down, the Engineer had gone to sleep, and the drivers of the diesel just buried themselves down into the rail to a point that they almost burned the rail in two; it was necessary to get another diesel to pull that one out of the

pit -- it had burned into the rail. That was a unique experience, but basically the construction was very fine, the tunnel work was excellent. When we had a wreck in one of the tunnels, we had real problems because we didn't have the wrecking equipment there nor the wrecking experience that you would normally find on American railroads.

**CPT BOYLE:** When you did have problems such as this, and some wrecking or maintenance situation demanded people to come from your other units, did you have the people on the train with you to take care of these problems, or did you have to send for them at another way station? How did you solve these problems?

**MG RICE:** It would depend entirely where the derailment would occur. Frequently we were hauling high-octane gasoline to the Russians for airplane use and when you'd have a wreck of one of those trains, you'd have an awful fire generally associated with it. We found that the only way to handle that was to let it burn out, then go there with bulldozers and pull the burned equipment from the right-of-way and rebuild the railroad. In fact, I well remember when we'd have a wreck of that kind; we'd have several tank cars of high-octane gasoline and the head end would catch on fire. You couldn't get near them so we'd take a 30 caliber rifle and shoot the others. We'd shoot a hole in them, and you'd think you had a flame thrower there where the gasoline would catch on fire and shoot right back at you. But this is the way we expedited the burning of the gasoline up. The fact that we had officer personnel from the American railroads who were familiar with problems of removing a wreck was very fortunate. In this country, we'd try to get the equipment re-tracked, but we never did there. We just pulled it away with bulldozers once the fire died down. Even if there wasn't a fire, we'd pull the wrecking equipment away because we wanted to open the railroad quickly and rebuild the track. That was the quickest way to open up the railway. The damage to the equipment was insignificant compared to the importance to get the track open and trains moving again.

**CPT BOYLE:** When you first started operations, when the Americans assumed the operations from the British, you said that the maintenance on the equipment was very poor. During that overlap period, did you have a lot of problems with the British as far as taking over operations, or did you see any major weaknesses in their operations?

**MG RICE:** No, they were delighted to have us take it over. We wanted to get them out of the way so we could go ahead and do our thing with the equipment and everything involved therewith. Our people were competent, and they just wanted the British out of the way so there wouldn't be any discussion as to who did what to whom. Actually, as far as I personally was concerned, we had no problem.

**CPT BOYLE:** Was there any delay at all in the arrival of your TOE equipment from the United States?

**MG RICE:** Oh, yes. There was the usual mix-up that you find in anything done of that magnitude. We received too much of some items and not enough of others. For instance, we received enough brake shoes to run that railroad for years, I think, wherein

we needed other equipment so badly; like repair parts for the locomotives. In time it settled down. But at the outset, the arrival of needed spare parts was quite a problem.

**CPT BOYLE:** How far behind you did your support maintenance units arrive? Did you have to improvise before their arrival?

**MG RICE:** When diesel locomotives arrived, the diesel maintenance people arrived practically at the same time. Our own people in B Company (the maintenance of equipment company) had worked with diesels in some areas. We had some officers who had come from diesel manufacturers, so we had some pretty highly trained people in our own organization insofar as the diesel operation and maintenance was concerned.

**CPT BOYLE:** As far as the diesel, as opposed to the steam engine, which did you prefer, particularly in the mountains where your battalion operated?

**MG RICE:** Oh, the diesels unquestionably. They were the answer to the problem of moving the traffic.

**CPT BOYLE:** What were the specific reasons you favored the diesel? Was it just a more powerful engine?

**MG RICE:** They were new and their failures were less frequent and, of course, in the heat of the tunnels and the heat of the desert, the personnel could survive a lot easier on diesels than they could on steam engines. The maintenance of the steam engines had been so inadequate before we arrived and the failures so frequent, because they hadn't had necessary boiler washes, flue inspections, or repairs. Consequently, we would have train after train standing still because it didn't have a locomotive to move it. After the diesels came, that problem gradually was resolved.

**CPT BOYLE:** Sir, on the steep grades, particularly on your northern division, did you find that you had to make any modifications as to the number or type of engines that you used to pull the trains?

**MG RICE:** Oh yes, we had to double-head and triple-head the diesels on the heavier grades going up the mountain. Our big problem, of course, was coming down the mountains and the use of brakes. Many of these cars were not equipped with air brakes and had the old hand brakes. We'd put natives on them to work the hand brakes, and frequently they'd go to sleep, and then you'd have a problem of a train without adequate braking capabilities. I remember instances where some of our boys would take out their .45 automatics and shoot at them to wake them up, not to hurt them, but to wake them up and put them on the hand brakes. We had some instances where individual cars would break loose because they didn't have air brakes. As time went on, we began to receive cars from this country that were equipped with air brakes. That's what our people had been accustomed to and the use of air brakes spread through the train was most helpful in moving the traffic.

**CPT BOYLE:** Andimeshk is often referred to in the monographs as the bottleneck of the operation. Why was this referred to and did that have anything to do with train configuration?

**MG RICE:** Whoever wrote that didn't know what they were saying, in my opinion. I was located in Andimeshk and we never had any bottleneck; traffic moved through there with expediency. We were at the bottom of the mountain. The mountains began just north of Andimeshk, and naturally, the problem of moving the traffic through those mountains was considerably greater, more complicated than moving them across a desert from the Ports of Khorramshahr and Bandar Shahpur. But we had a yard at Andimeshk and we were operating trains into there constantly and there was never- an instance that I can recall where any trains were held out of Andimeshk because the yard was full. We kept the yard flowing. Now there may have been instances where we'd consolidate locomotives, or didn't have enough power to operate trains upon arrival, but I object completely to the idea that it was a bottleneck. It was just a normal operating problem that you would find where you go from flat, a no grade railroad to a 1-1/2% mountain railroad to have the necessary power always to move trains upon arrival. You had to wait until the power came back from the previous operation, but we never had any problems with a yard being over congested.

**CPT BOYLE:** As far as maintenance support, I know that frequently when the trains arrived back, particularly the engines that were used up in the Soviet area, they often came back in poor condition because the Soviets couldn't maintain equipment. Did you find that to be a significant problem?

**MG RICE:** They didn't seem to be able to maintain equipment. To begin with, they didn't know, and number two, they didn't care. Consequently, what you got back may or may not be in condition to operate, within a degree of efficiency, but that was just one of the problems of working with the Soviets. It was very difficult, at times, to make them understand we were there to help them in a common cause. Their arrogance and the feeling that we were not to be trusted was quite evident at times.

**CPT BOYLE:** When you were in Tehran, particularly at the switch yard they were converting over to Soviet responsibility, did you have problems as far as liaison with your Russian equivalents?

**MG RICE:** I shared an office with a Russian whom I found extremely difficult. They did not believe in air brakes. They would never tell us what type of trains they were bringing down to the point where they interchanged with us, and it was quite difficult to make him understand that it was to our mutual interest to move these loaded trains north with dispatch and return the empties as quickly as possible for the next load. Obviously he had to report everything to a some higher official somewhere, and the delay in getting any action on his part was both time consuming and frustrating.

**CPT BOYLE:** When you started operations, initially they had some very significant problems with the ports, and I know you personally were involved with solving those

problems. What specifically did you find when you went down in the Summer of 1943 to try and help out the port operations?

**MG RICE:** I had been at Tehran in charge of the detachment of the 730th there, and we had charge of the operations of the northern end of the railroad from Qum up. One day in the Summer of 1943 the then BG Paul F. Yount called me in and told me that I was being sent to the Port of Bandar Shahpur. There had been some complaint on the part of the port operators through the Commanding General that the railroad personnel were not moving the traffic away from shipside promptly and placing empty cars to receive more. I flew to Ahwaz and then traveled by rail in a boxcar to Bandar Shahpur, where I found a detachment of the 711th Railway Operating Battalion under the command of a First Lieutenant endeavoring to work under the most horrible climate conditions I had ever known. There was no real problem except there was a lack of administrative planning as to how these soldiers could handle the yard operation, handle the empties that came down from Ahwaz, and get them there in time to coordinate with arrival of the ships. We tackled the problem by working with the Port Commander, who was a Lieutenant Colonel, and working with the Railroad Headquarters in Ahwaz as to what we expected and when it would arrive. And, in a matter of a short time, we were able to solve the problem and, working with the port people, find ways and means of completely satisfying them and alleviating the previously existing problems. Later on that same summer, as I recall (the date has slipped my mind now), I was transferred to the Port of Khorramshahr which was a larger operation from a standpoint of traffic being unloaded to move to the Soviets, than Bandar Shahpur. I found, there again, with the buildup of the port and the continuing demand that this traffic be moved away from shipside with the slightest possible delay, and empties be made available for reloading, that again we had a fall down between the rail operating personnel, and the port people in planning and working together. The main problem, of course, was just -that each was trying to do his own thing individually, and, as a result, each blamed the other for the fall down. All we had to do was to sit down and decide that we wanted to get the job done and each group worked with the other to see that everyone knew the problem and how to attack it. Consequently, the problem soon disappeared.

**CPT BOYLE:** Did you find that there were any inadequacies in the switching lines or the railway switching yards at shipside, or near shipside?

**MG RICE:** We had plenty of facilities. It was just a case of a coordination of effort, as well as a coordination of need as to how it should be done. The switching should be done to interfere least with unloading on the part of the stevedores. Coordination of effort had not previously been really attempted.

**CPT BOYLE:** I know, particularly in the case of the equipment you used, that the ports did not have the adequate cranes and machinery to unload the railroad equipment and a lot of it was damaged. Did you find this to be the case?

**MG RICE:** That is correct. We didn't have the heavy equipment to unload those things that had been sent over there; loaded in the States with adequate equipment, and we

had to improvise in many instances, and sometimes the way that we had to do it overseas was rather harmful to what we were unloading. But to say the least, the job was accomplished and normally, we'd be able to rectify any mistake.

**CPT BOYLE:** In August of 1943, deficiencies in Russian operations got so bad that almost all 3,000 cars were at the Russian end and there was an actual embargo put on the Russians. At that point, how did the Russians solve this enormous problem?

**MG RICE:** At that time I was down in the ports and frankly, I cannot answer that question because I don't know. But I would assume that they solved the problem by simply running the trains south. Yet they had refused to cooperate when I was in Tehran working with their representative. They seemed to think that they would do it their own way with no regard for the return of the empties. All they wanted were the loads. They had to unload the traffic rapidly at the northern end of the railway in order to get the empties available to move south, and apparently, they had failed to do this.

**CPT BOYLE:** Did you ever find that the Soviets selectively discharged the trains; that they took off the cargo they wanted at the time and left the rest and really didn't have a good system as far as cargo discharge?

**MG RICE:** I never saw that myself, but I understood that it happened with regularity. They would give priority to certain items and the remainder which may or may not have been in excess of their needs was allowed to remain on the cars, and consequently, tie up their equipment.

**CPT BOYLE:** Did they make a significant use of native labor similar to the American operations?

**MG RICE:** I am told that they attempted to, but their methods were so rough that they did not perform the job with much satisfaction as far as their operation was concerned.

**CPT BOYLE:** As the operation went on and more and more natives were used in the operations, you had a real problem with pilferage. How did you solve this in your division?

**MG RICE:** That was one of our great problems almost from the beginning. Generally, most of the American soldiers agreed that the natives that surrounded the railroads were all descendents of Ali Baba and his forty thieves. They were very skilled in the art of being able to abscond with property of all types. Almost unbelievable the problems that we encountered with such things as automobile spare parts, truck spare parts, tires. I remember one instance where they took a carload of truck tires and had put them in a building, and sealed the building with their mud walls that they used so that the building was completely sealed. But apparently there was a problem among them as to who would get all of the results of this sale of these rubber goods, and somebody talked. Unfortunately on occasion there would be an American enlisted man who became involved because of the monies that would be offered him by the natives to assist them

in unloading a car at some outlying point; having a car that may have been set off at some outlying point as a result of a mechanical failure, such as a hot journal or a broken draw head. The natives would then attempt to open the car and take out anything that was in there that they could sell or barter with. We did have trouble, particularly with food stuff. Whenever there was food stuff involved, we had to surround the car with very careful guards or else the contents would disappear. And I might add that the customs of that land were so unique that every supervisor on payday would shake down those persons whom may be reporting to him and get part of their pay for the privilege of working. Finally, it reached a point where we were paying the natives who worked at the track. Rather than paying them in Rials, we were paying them in kilos of beans, in sugar, in tea, and items of that kind that they needed so badly to be able to work. We would have American enlisted men with loaded weapons standing thereby to prevent these foreman, or other supervisors, from taking the food stuff away from the natives that we had paid them for. The result was unbelievable. A system that seemed to exist of greed and corruption at every level of supervision. Pilferage was a problem, both on the part of the natives primarily, and, in some instances, the American troops who had dreams of great wealth as a result of being able to assist the natives in securing some of these items. I could go on and on. There was one instance that I might cite that I've always remembered so well. There was a shipment of alcoholic beverages to go to the American Embassy in Moscow and it was unloaded at the Port of Khorramshahr. Apparently, the railroad communication among the American GI's between every station knew exactly what was in that car, the car number, and the train it was in. While there were several cases of alcoholic beverages placed in the car, when it arrived at Tehran, it contained nothing but a few empty bottles that had been broken in transit. I could go on and on about the problem that were engendered when the State Department complained that the American Ambassador- in Moscow had to drink Vodka instead of American-made whiskey, and the courts martial that ensued. It is sufficient to say that that was just another instance that everybody knew what was moving on the railroad and whether it had any barter value to the people who might want to eat it or drink it. The pilferage problem was paramount.

**CPT BOYLE:** Who primarily did you use for guards for the trains since a lot of Americans were involved in the operation of the railroad?

**MG RICE;** Primarily the Russians guarded the trains; the Russians were armed with automatic weapons and were all over the trains, particularly where they contained ammunition, armament, or food stuff. There were Russian guards on every train. The Americans operated at the head end, the locomotive. Frequently, we had Americans on the locomotive who were what we call train people. They were the brake men and the conductors who would be responsible for setting cars off if, and when, you had a mechanical failure. In several instances, we had very grave situations arise whereby there would be a mechanical failure such as a hot journal or a broken knuckle and pin that they'd use for coupling devices; and when the American crewmen attempted to set the car off at a siding, the Russian guard would just lower his gun and point it at the American and use the Russian, 'nyet,' which indicated 'no, you can't uncouple that car'. Then you had a confrontation. The American soldier looking in the face of an automatic

rifle would be in a dilemma as what to do. We issued instructions after a couple of instances of that kind to the Americans that when this happens, uncouple the engine and proceed to the next point of communication and contact battalion headquarters. And when that happened, we immediately would contact the Russians because they were located up and down the railroad. Russian officers would go to the point and instruct their enlisted personnel what to do or else radio them, if possible, when we had any communications that could be used to contact these people. But frequently, it was necessary that the railroad be tied up until such time as we could send a Russian officer, who would then straighten out this enlisted man to a point that he would allow the American crew on the train to take the necessary action to move the train. We had one perfectly horrible instance where a Russian soldier shot an American and killed him. This was a real confrontation and required considerable handling on the part of the Russian officers. Although I must say that after we captured the Russian soldier who had shot the American, the Russians very promptly took care of the situation. Where you could get to the Russian officer-in-charge, they would promptly take action. The problem was that their enlisted people on the trains had one thought in mind and that was to move the train, and anytime that was interfered with, the only answer they knew was to point the gun at the American who they thought might be responsible for the delay.

**CPT BOYLE:** In the beginning when trains were configured in port, were the Russians involved at all in that planning operation, or did the Americans take care of all the railroad operations themselves?

**MG RICE:** The Americans took care of all of the operations at the ports; the Russians were not involved. But when the trains were ready for dispatch, then the Russian guards were placed throughout the train and rode on the cars on the trip over the railway.

**CPT BOYLE:** In addition to pilferage, did you have any problems with outright brigandage or looting from any pro-Nazi factions that might be in Iran?

**MG RICE:** We did not, to the best of my knowledge. We had guards on the bridges and tunnels. We were always suspicious. We knew that there were Nazi elements involved in the country, and sympathizers, and we'd been told by the German broadcast when we got there that they knew we were there, they knew what we were there for, and that once we got the railroad operating properly, they'd come down and take it away from us. But we had British colonial troops, the Sikhs and Gurkhas who guarded the bridges and tunnels and were in camps all up and down the railroad, and they did a great job. Now we did have some train wrecks that we thought at the time were the result of sabotage, but really those instances considering the circumstances under which we operated, were relatively few.

**CPT BOYLE:** In the Persian Gulf Theater early in the operations, they used motor transport while the railroads were being established. What were the basic advantages of the railroad over the motor transport mode?

**MG RICE:** They used motor transport during the entire time but the roads were terrible, to begin with, and the dry, dusty trails that these transports had to travel were terribly difficult and hard on the personnel, as well as creating a problem with getting the traffic through. Of course, the tonnages were large and the mountain roads were such that it was slow and laborious trying to move these trucks over. They had a big trucking operation and, of course, we built an awful lot of assembly plants for vehicles that we were delivering to the Russians in great quantity. We were moving the traffic to the assembly plants on the railroad and there they would be assembled and driven through and delivered to the Russians. So the motor transport operation was quite large and quite extensive, but their problems were tremendous because of the inadequate highways up through the mountains where they had to travel to try to get close to the Russian border.

**CPT BOYLE:** Motor transport operations in themselves involve much more resources than the railroads as far as fuel and personnel, and did you find that the railroads took the brunt of the operation as far as moving lend-lease cargo to the Soviets?

**MG RICE:** We moved far more than they could move over the motor transport route but we all worked together to try to get the job done. The fact of the matter is, some of the motor transport people were in the camp right next to ours in Andimeshk. One of the commanding officers was a person that I had been in college with so we had a great camaraderie in sharing effort and experiences whenever it was necessary. But basically, they did not have the capability that we had of moving tonnage of that quantity.

**CPT BOYLE:** You mentioned before that you had a language problem with the Iranians. How did you solve this language problem, or how did you go about establishing better communications with the workers?

**MG RICE:** It was never completely solved, but they learned a few American slang words that signified disgust, or denial, or refusal, and the Americans, of course, learned enough of their language to be able to say certain things that would be meaningful. But it was a real problem with the Russians not understanding English, and the Americans not understanding either Russian or the Iranian dialect, and the Iranians not understanding either, and the British Sikhs and Gurkhas not understanding either, unless you got one of their officers who may or may not have been educated in England. The language barriers were tremendous and sign languages were used. American slang was soon learned by the Iranians to a point that they didn't realize what they were saying, but the meaning was well-established.

**CPT BOYLE:** What other cultural problems did you have with the Iranian laborers as far as any religion or customs?

**MG RICE:** They were all, of course, of the Moslem faith, and they would have to unload from moving trains frequently. When the train stopped, they would unload and get out their praying stoles and face Mecca, go through their genuflections and say their prayers

and, frequently, they wouldn't stop until the one passenger train we operated started moving again. I was always fearful that we would kill any number of them and sometimes, we did cut legs off as a result of trying to board the moving train. But to say the least, they were very faithful and dedicated in their religious belief. Whenever there would be a court martial, of course, we would take their oath on the Moslem Holy Scriptures, the Koran, and to see their fear of even touching this manuscript was very revealing. They were dedicated, but their religious belief did not preclude their stealing, lying, or anything else that might be convenient for whatever situation obtained. But to say the least, they prayed with regularity.

**CPT BOYLE:** Sir, early in the establishment of the railroad operations in the Persian Gulf, I know you had some problems obtaining food supplies for your soldiers. How did you go about solving these problems?

**MG RICE:** Naturally, when men were spread out over a period of railroad from the Persian Gulf to Tehran, the logistics of food supply and equipment certainly was one of the big problems that we were faced with right at the outset. There were instances where adequate food was not made available to our troops which was very distressing and demoralizing. Consequently, we had some instances where some of our troops actually pilfered some of the cars loaded with food stuff, and then we had a question of whether or not these men should be court martialed or given a letter of commendation for taking the only course of action available at that time. I remember so well that we had one case where one of our enlisted men, a mess sergeant, pilfered a carload of British food stuff and because of the international situation it was necessary that he be court martialed. While I don't remember all of the details (it's been so many years ago), I do recall well that he was given a reprimand as the decision of the court, and the reprimand was written by a General Officer. While he was reprimanded in the first paragraph of the written communication, he was complimented in the highest manner in the second and third paragraphs for using the initiative of the American noncommissioned officer in seeing that his men were properly cared for under harsh conditions. We all laughed over that and thought the General did a great job in both reprimanding and praising this enlisted man. But that was typical of the problems we encountered.

Drinking water was another great problem. You must remember that in Iran country you had nothing whatsoever in the way of sanitation. Children died; we used to hear such statistics that 90 percent of the babies died before they reached the age of three. Women started bearing children as soon as they were biologically old enough, and they bore them constantly until they died at an early age compared to women in this country. Disease was rampant. Lack of food and lack of water, made the average native weak and the use of opium was the only medicine they had. And when they had any serious pain, why the thing to do in their opinion, was to smoke the pipe. All of this is almost unbelievable.

The methods of raising agricultural products was so old fashioned, and you felt like they were threshing their grain as they did in the days of Christ by having a donkey pull a

stone round and round in a pile of grain, and then throwing the grain up in the air and let the wind separate the grain from the chaff. Things of that kind that you just wouldn't believe could exist in the 20th Century, but that was the Iran that we found when we went there. Water was a priceless commodity. Those who controlled the water supply controlled the destiny of thousands, and that was another problem for us. We had to get water that was fit to drink, and of course, whenever you went anywhere in that terrific heat, it was necessary that you have adequate water supply for a period of time that you might be away from a water source in case your transport, be it train or motor vehicle, broke down. We had several instances where people did not so provide adequate water and they were found dead in the desert. These things were new to those of us who had lived in the temperate zones in this country. It took us a while to really realize how to cope with it, and we did lose people as a result. We had heat stroke, heat exhaustion, and we took salt tablets in great volume. But we had some personnel who gave us great difficulty in getting them to take the salt tablets. We tried to get them to take the salt tablets at mess time and usually we'd issue them as they went in the mess hall and then you'd find the salt tablets laying on the ground inside the mess tent where they had been dropped. Finally, we had to make our personnel take the salt tablets as they were delivered to them by an officer. These were some of the minor problems. Of course when the monsoon seasons came, the prickly heat covered you from head to foot and made everyone irritable, and you couldn't sleep as a result of it. But the tenacity of the American GI was a wonderful thing to see, with his profanity and his slang; which he soon taught the Iranians -- that's what they learned first. They did a beautiful job running those trains.

**CPT BOYLE:** Given the harsh conditions and the morale problem with the troops, did you have any special way of moving the chaplains around? Did you receive any other morale support of any kind?

**MG RICE:** Oh yes, that's another thing. I'm sorry I didn't tell you before, but we had this most wonderful chaplain, actually we had several of them, and they got on the trains that went from camp to camp. They would ride with the crews, and they generally had everything from needle and thread to buttons. I used to accuse one of them of carrying prophylactics, but I don't believe that was quite correct. They carried all of the necessities that they thought some GI might need and didn't have, including a Bible. They were men of great moral courage and dedication, and I've never forgotten them. They added much to the life of these people because boredom over there was so terrific. The same thing every day of running these trains and being constantly harassed by the heat and the flies. The flies were perfectly terrible. You would think to have a fly fly in your mouth, you'd be deathly ill and you'd probably would feel slightly nauseated after you'd swallowed the first one, but from then on it was not unusual. If you opened your mouth to speak, a fly might fly in. The filth of the pitiful people, the blindness of many of them, the disease ridden native that would come begging with his hands stretched out; this you would almost be fearful he might touch you and you'd contact some unknown disease. We did have trouble trying to convince our men that the prostitutes of that area were disease-ridden. If they had sexual intercourse with a prostitute, the possibility of their getting some venereal disease unknown to our medical

officer was quite possible. This was a real problem. These prostitutes knew when payday would be. We had our camps surrounded with barbed wire entanglements and mines, and signs written in Farsi so they could read it. Frequently, a prostitute would try to crawl through that fence on payday and be killed. Finally we had our MPs load up a group of them and put them in a boxcar and sent it to the Russian territory just to get rid of them. These were some of the problems of trying to preserve the health, as well as the sanity, of the American soldier under those conditions.

Certainly there was some vodka available, while we had no real trouble from the standpoint of drinking. There was none of that dope available to the best of my knowledge. We never had any instance where, to my knowledge, any of our soldiers became involved with the opium pipe smoking that prevailed among the native population. It was a constant concern though, and certainly we were fortunate that drugs did not present a problem.

**CPT BOYLE:** How involved was the Iranian Government in both your efforts in the war in the theater and in taking care of their workers or supporting their workers?

**MG RICE:** There didn't seem, to the best of my knowledge, to be much action on the part of the Iranian Government other than to see what they could get for themselves. I must say that the Shah and his Queen came down, and I took them for a ride on a diesel locomotive when we first got the diesels. He was a very gracious young man at that time, and in my opinion, was doing a awful lot for his country. While people abuse him, I still think that compared to what had preceded him, he was a great ruler from a standpoint of improving the lot of the natives. At the same time, we had the Iranian railroad people who had been there and who had been in charge of the railroad prior to the arrival of the foreign troops. They were interested only, as far as we could tell, in what they could get out of it. Many of them, of course, were not used because of their inability to do the job that we wanted done. We had to just go in and take over. But graft and corruption was so paramount among them that everything they did; they were trying to increase their personal wealth by in some way becoming involved in the financial transaction, or in being able to barter with something that they had been able to steal. I have very little to say in support of their methods of handling the railroad or the people.

**CPT BOYLE:** When the Americans took control of the operations, they did a lot to improve the relations with the Iranians that neither the British nor the Russians had done. Part of this was a wage classification system and a lot of other similar type things. What other special programs did you see in support of the Iranian population that the Americans implemented?

**MG RICE:** We only arranged to help them medically. They had individuals who needed medical attention and they had nothing there, no drugs of any type. Where we had them working for us frequently, we would have our medical officers administer to them and their families with such minor things as aspirin tablets. In addition to that, of course, we dealt with the Iranian Chieftains of these tribes who would be building contractors to build the mud cantonments that we lived in and we paid them either in money or in food

stuff, once we got food stuff. Their supplies were so limited. Tea, known as Tchi in their country, and sugar were precious commodities. We could make that type of thing available to them where they worked for us. The local Gendarme did try to cooperate in several instances. Of course, they were victims of their own society in which they lived, but certain individuals were intelligent and good. You had a language problem, of course. We had certain interpreters that we used who had been educated either in this country or in England who could speak English; we would have to use them, and paid them well. Vie did try to be humane with them, which had not been true with some of our predecessors.

**CPT BOYLE:** One particular weak point is the safety standards that were used before the arrival of the Americans. As a Battalion Commander and previous to that, what type safety measures did you establish to solve this weakness?

**MG RICE:** We did everything we could. Vie wrote a book of rules regarding the operation of railroads. Railroads are operated by rules, and the Iranians had no rules that were adequate for that type of operation. So a group American operating men got together and wrote a book of rules to apply to the operation of that railroad, and it was a good book because it was predicated on the experiences in this country and followed very closely the American Railroad Rule standards prescribed by the Association of American Railroads. For this type of operation, it was manual block all the way and we put our people out to operate the manual blocks, which was a terrible assignment. These young men in these lonely wayside stations, two or three of them, working 12 hours apiece. They had to survive there, taking food coming from the local headquarters and having to prepare it themselves. Usually there would be an Iranian family living in the san-e building of these block stations, but we couldn't depend on the Iranians to dispatch the train safely. So we had to put our own people at these various wayside stations to give the train orders to prevent two trains opposing one another on a single track in the same block. These men could go there and keep their sanity, fearful of being injured by some foreign element, lacking anything but just complete boredom, except seeing a passing train in each direction spasmodically. That's the only contact they had -- the telephones that we had finally got working, but from one station to the next. You see when a train arrived, the operator would call the next station in advance and get permission for this train to enter the block. Then he would give him what the natives called a ticket. It would be the equivalent of a train order authorizing the train to proceed from A to B. Operator B would hold all signals stopped until this train arrived. These boys had to actually do that day on end, seven days a week, with nothing to do unless we could get books to them or things of that kind to read. They had no possible relationship with the outside world except to see a train crew occasionally that stopped there, to be held waiting for another train to clear the block. f

**CPT BOYLE:** How did these independent operators handle the manual block system without communications in the beginning, because I know you didn't have communication equipment?

**MG RICE:** We had to put in a communications system there. We couldn't run the trains without it, unless you just held all trains at some station where there was communication until so many got by and then single-lined them in the opposite direction. We had to do that occasionally until we got the communications working. In other words, we had communications between the major stations with the Iranian telephone system and then we could hold trains at one point until the last engine number, (you run trains by engine numbers) got by. Then we'd single-line in the opposite direction and so-called run them on snake. You would run prepared to stop short of anything ahead of you, which was a very slow laborious operation to avoid a rear end collision when you had one train following another in a block.

**CPT BOYLE:** What special measures, if any, did you implement when you were running trains composed entirely of petroleum cars?

**MG RICE:** No more than we used with ammunition or any of the others. We ran them all alike. We tried to give them complete manual block protection all the way, but we ran the petroleum cars at the same speed, knowing, of course, the inflammable nature of it. But we've moved bombs and every other type of munitions, so it was just a part of the day.

**CPT BOYLE:** So, you depended to a great extent on the abilities of individual enlisted soldiers to accomplish their jobs. In other words, even though there was a lot of officers involved, the basic day-to-day operations still depended in great part on these isolated individuals.

**MG RICE:** Absolutely, the enlisted personnel were absolutely some of the finest, well, just typical American railroad people. I can cite you many people who were over there that I have kept in touch with since the war. Many of them are gone now. We had some locomotive engineers who came from the American railroads. We had people of that kind who were all of the finest caliber. There'd be sergeants in rank, and what they did to train these young people who did not have any prior railroad experience in the fundamentals of railroading, was just absolutely amazing. They were the guys that did it, the enlisted men.

**CPT BOYLE:** So you depended more on a hands-on, on-the-job type training than any other type of training program?

**MG RICE:** Exactly. All of the yard masters who handled the switch crews in the yard were enlisted men. The men who ran the trains, the men who serviced the engines, they were all enlisted personnel and working under enlisted personnel. While we had officers in charge who established the general policy, the implementation of it was all done by the enlisted personnel and we had some great men over there, typical of the American GI. We had some of the greatest soldiers around.

**CPT BOYLE:** I see. As far as the equipment that you used, a lot of the equipment had different wheel configurations. What special measures did you take to adapt the equipment to use over there when it came from the United States?

**MG RICE:** We had a lot of trouble with the longer cars because the track curvature required a short wheel base. The four-wheel buggy that the natives used was small compared to our long boxcars. We had to adjust the train lengths and adjust the locations in the trains of certain equipment, which experience proved we had to do to keep them from derailing or having trains buckle burn going down a grade where you had the air on the front end and these little light things on the rear end, with nothing but handbrakes. They might buckle if you put the air on too quickly on the head end. But these were things that our men used good sense in and all. To give you an example, we ran that railroad for years and never had a train break away and run back down the mountain. We had cases where cars would break away and we'd have to shunt them into a side track and let them wreck. But right after we turned the railroad back to the Iranians when we were planning to go to the port of embarkation, they had a trainload of various commodities including some gasoline that they were moving and they cut the engines off on a grade to put a car in a siding. Of course, the rest of the train started to back down the mountain, and right at the head end was a carload of human beings going to their shrine. The train ran back down the mountain until it wrecked, caught on fire and burned up all those people, and they had to call us out to clear up the wreck. We were in camp getting ready to leave and the Iranians came over and asked if we could help them. They were quite inadequate in knowledge of how to deal with things of that kind. But the point I'm making is that the Americans had the intellect to cope with these unusual situations and find ways and means of taking care of the situation, whereas the Iranian was unable to. I think that still pertains to present situations we read about.

**CPT BOYLE:** As far as accounting for cargo, a lot of the time you had to take cars out, switch cars out. What manual system of paperwork did you use to account for the cargo?

**MG RICE:** There was very little accounting done. That was one of the big problems. Of course, eventually we got teletypes where we could list every car and what was in it. But to start off with, we just are or less got the cars together in the train and sent them north and we didn't know what was in them and nobody else knew. I don't think the Russians knew until they opened the doors and found out. This settled down as time went on. But to begin with, there was very little accounting; it was just a case of loading the car at the port and putting it in a train and sending it to the Russians. These cases contained everything from beans to ammunition.

**CPT BOYLE:** Particularly later on, how did you integrate the civilian operations and the needs of the Iranians with the military operations?

**MG RICE:** We never let them become involved. As long as we operated it to any great extent we did it all. They had one passenger train called a Mussafra and they did

operate that. But frequently, we'd put people on there because you had Americans moving on it too, so we had people on that train to be sure to operate it properly and safely. It went up and down every day.

Apparently, the old rule had been that if that train was late, the Iranian Engineer was horsewhipped. If we wanted to really get the Iranian to work; if we were preparing a piece of track and wanted to get them to move with expediency, we told them the Mussafra was coming, and boy, they really turned on the gas. In those days prior to our arrival, of course, physical punishment was the way that they controlled everybody's destiny. We operated the railroad and then, all of a sudden, we turned it back to the Iranians. That's when that incident I alluded to occurred.

**CPT BOYLE:** During the time that the Americans did operate the trains, how did you apportion a certain amount of the trains assets for use by the Iranians? In other words, for shipment of goods they needed to certain locations?

**MG RICE:** There was very little. Their native economy suffered badly because we moved munitions of war. If there was space on the train, then a native cargo was just used as a filler and frequently, it didn't move for a long time.

**CPT BOYLE:** Their economy, of course, was very involved in oil and petroleum products. At that time, did you depend on a local supply of diesel, particularly when you brought the diesel engines over, or was all the diesel moved from the United States to the Iranian area for your use?

**MG RICE:** Diesel fuel was available there. You see Abadan was the center of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and we had ample fuel right there at the big refinery at Abadan. The economy of the country was such that they lived off us to a great extent. Of course, you had the rug merchants and they were selling things to the Americans in great quantity. They continued their farming and raising certain animals, but we fed an awful lot of them because they would just flock to the railroads to get jobs, to the assembly plants for the automobiles and the cantonments to work for the Americans. Of course, they were fed and paid frequently in food. Consequently, their economy was much better with us there than it would've been under any condition they had known for many of them.

**CPT BOYLE:** General Rice, when the Iranian railroad was constructed it was built by the Germans. When you arrived in Iran, what was your impression of the construction of the railroad and how efficiently it was built?

**MG RICE:** We found an unusually fine system, the engineering of which was as good or better than anything I've ever seen in this country. To build that track through the mountains the way they did, required expertise in railroad construction second to none. Steel rails were relatively light compared to American railroads, but good rail from the standpoint of the traffic they moved. The story was that the old Shah, the father of the one who had just come on the throne when we were there, had taken his finger and had

drawn a line from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea and said, "I want the railroad here." The fact that there were mountains in the way meant nothing to him, and consequently, the engineers from Germany, and I also understand there were some from Switzerland, came there and designed and built this railroad. We were told by German radio in English shortly after we arrived that they knew we had arrived and they knew that we'd come there to run the railway, and we were told, "We know you're there and once you get it up running properly, we'll come down and take it away from you." I never have forgotten the feeling that we experienced when we were told that they knew all about us, what we were there for, and what we were expected to do. But actually, the building of that railroad through the mountains, the gradients that they obtained, and the overall engineering expertise that was exemplified in its construction was amazing and beautiful to an engineer.

**CPT BOYLE:** Did you have any particular problems with the sand and the rock as far as affecting the way, or did the Germans elevate the way to a point where sand wasn't a problem?

**MG RICE:** The Germans had done a great job of laying the track across the desert using good ballast. There was an abundance of good rock in that country, and they had gotten it and brought it down there and laid down a good sub grade, and then a good ballast bed on which to put the track and we really had no trouble because of the expertise of the construction.

**CPT BOYLE:** You had alluded before to a problem where the Iranians had some French instructions for operating part of their way. Could you go ahead and explain that?

**MG RICE:** Amazingly, we found that French seemed to be the one language that was pretty basically understood by the educated people of Iran, in addition to their own language. Their track specifications that we were able to get control of were all in French. Since the steel ties were of different lengths to hold a gauge properly and all of the plans were written in French, we had an amazingly difficult time trying to figure out what went where in rebuilding some of the structures that were damaged due to wreckage. I recall so well early on when we first got there, we had this wreck and we had to rebuild the switch. We had the materials to put there but because everything was in French, and not a member of our group could read French, although we knew some basic words, but nothing that would be any specifications of their track structure. We had the natives there with us, with the native track master, but he was completely incompetent and must've been a political appointee because he was absolutely of no value in trying to guide our men into what went where. By trial and error, we rebuilt them.

**CPT BOYLE:** When the trains were transferred to the Soviet Union, did the Soviets have the same gauge and spacing of tracks as the Iranian railroad?

**MG RICE:** No, they did not and that required a complete transshipment of everything. They had a 5-foot gauge as compared to our standard. 41 8 1/2" and we moved a lot of cars to them. In fact, some of them had the so-called adjustable gauge insofar as the axles are concerned where the wheels could be moved out for the wider gauge or moved in. But we moved many tons of equipment to the Russians. They had to rehabilitate their railroad equipment as well as their armament and we moved any number of cars loaded on cars. The majority of them were moved as commodities loaded on our cars going to the Russians with 5-foot gauge.

**CPT BOYLE:** So, in actuality, the Americans did the modifications to the equipment before they were given to the Russians?

**MG RICE:** That's right, they were built in this country.

**CPT BOYLE:** As far as host-nation support as a concept, do you feel that there are differences between the various countries or areas like Western Europe and the Eastern countries?

**MG RICE:** Yes, I do. I very definitely think religious differences are very conspicuous. The attitude of graft and corruption that seemed to be common in that part of the world caused a lack of, shall we say, the milk of human kindness. Those people just try to survive, they don't live. There are only a few very, very wealthy people who have all of the jewels, property, and food that money can buy, but they composed a very small percentage in any of the Moslem countries that I am acquainted with. A vast majority of the people are so poor and so lacking in the necessities of life that it is almost inconceivable. One of the most horrible memories that I have from a standpoint of human decency, is the sight of natives in a human waste pit picking up grains of corn that had passed through the GI human body for food. That gives you just a little example of what these ragged, dirty, unkempt people would do to live. That's a true story.

**CPT BOYLE:** When you began your retrograde operations moving to port, what type problems did you have as far as getting your people ready to go back to the United States?

**MG RICE:** Naturally there were many little problems; no major ones. The idea of coming home was so joyfully received by everybody, the idea that they were going to get out of what they called-'that God-forsaken land that Christ knew", because you know this land had so many things that are spoken of in the Old Testament. For instance, the Tomb of Daniel (of lion's den fame) was right between Ahwaz and Andimeshk. Pregnant women would go to his tomb to pray that the unborn child would be male because a woman's value in that country depended on how many sons she could bear. As you recall, the Shah divorced his first wife because she did not give him a son and she was a very beautiful woman, by the way. She was the one that rode on that diesel that I alluded to.

As you can well imagine, a lot of the soldiers had dogs that they had adopted. They didn't want to leave the dog behind, but the main thing was the idea of walking away from the cantonment and leaving everything from kitchen equipment to bulldozers, all types of motor vehicles, all types of railroad equipment, all types of housekeeping equipment. By this time, we'd gotten some pretty sophisticated mess equipment like coolers, freezers, and things of this kind. Everything was just left in place. We left it there for whoever wanted to take it, we were just told to leave. I don't know how much of it was ever returned to America. I seriously think none of it was, to the best of my knowledge. We left everything from big vehicles of every description to jeeps and everything we had. We just walked away. We got on a train to go to the port, with nothing but our personal belongings. The GI's had in their barracks bag the same stuff they'd brought over to Iran on a troop ship. Some of them may have had a few rugs they'd gotten or stuff that had been mailed from home, but they came away from there with nothing more than what they had taken.

**CPT BOYLE:** When you began your retrograde operation, apparently you left most of your equipment. Did the Russians, British or any other allied troops take over operations for you, or did the operations just cease at that time on the railroad?

**MG RICE:** The operation of the railroad was taken back by the Iranians. Other than that, I truly don't know, I left Iran and went to the Pacific.

**CPT BOYLE:** When you flew into the Philippines, of course, you started preparations for the invasion of Japan. At that time, what was your impression of the resources available to you to plan this operation?

**MG RICE:** When I arrived in the Philippines, by way of India and China, I was assigned to AFWESPAC (American Forces, Western Pacific) working there in the Headquarters in Manila. Shortly thereafter, I was transferred to Sixth Army Headquarters, located some distance north of Manila at San Fernando Papango. I was given the job of planning the invasion that would be undertaken by troops of Sixth Army, working with the planning staff to bring in railroad operating personnel and railroad equipment. This was in the early Summer of 1945 and we made very detailed and complete studies of the area where we were to land. We would bring the rail equipment in on vessels capable of bringing them to the beach and build tracks from existing trackage out to the beach so they could be on a roll-on/roll-off operation. Then in August of that year, the atomic bombs were dropped and the war ended. Of course, all of our plans were then of no value.

**CPT BOYLE:** In the actual planning stages, at that time you felt that you had to depend on American assets, and that if the invasion was implemented, you would not be able to depend on any Japanese assets?

**MG RICE:** We were unsure just what we would find and felt that in the initial phases of the invasion, the Japanese would destroy the railroad as they fell back from the beaches and any rail facilities that were available to allow us to supply our forces as

they moved inland. We were planning to move equipment, locomotives, and personnel to repair the track structures wherever they may be, rebuild whatever was necessary, and to move in with our equipment to supply our troops in the field.

**CPT BOYLE:** This plan was never implemented and later, you went into Japan and you were responsible for operating a portion of the empire's railroad assets. What is your impression of the railroad system and how easy was it to convert to American use?

**MG RICE:** I went into Japan with the advanced echelon of Sixth Army with then MG George Decker (later Chief of the United States Army) in command. A group of us had flown from the Philippines to Okinawa and then flew into Japan, landed on an airstrip outside of Wakayama and my job was to meet with the railroad executives who controlled the properties in the lower half of Kyushu, Honshu, and Shikoku. I found an excellent railroad operated by well-trained, capable people. No problems whatsoever in having full transportation facilities available for anything we needed. When Sixth Army troops came ashore, landed over the beaches, I had planned with the Japanese to have troop trains available to move them inland to various destinations in the Sixth Army area and they did it in a most efficient way. They were completely cooperative. We were told that the Emperor had told them to accept the Americans and be cooperative in every respect, and they were, as far as I am concerned. My main trouble was that I had no help; and I was trying to work on a 24-hour shift for about 3 days and sleep with my head on my arms at times. As the troops came over the beaches, having the trains available and the equipment to move them to various locations was difficult because the Japanese would do nothing until I told them to. But the minute I told them, they did it. But I had to find out what troops were coming in on each landing and where they were destined, and finally I got a radio that we put on top of the Japanese railroad station and I could talk to the command post on the beach which was several miles away. But I had to go up this ladder to the roof of the station to get communications through and receive them. One day as I was coming down the ladder, I saw this jeep stop in front of the station and I noticed this officer sitting in there; I just glanced down as I was backing down the ladder which I learned in railroading (you never go down any other way), and I saw all of these bright things shining on his shoulder. I thought it must be a British officer with a bunch of pips on his shoulder. I got down and looked again, and I realized they were stars. I walked up to the jeep and saluted and reported to the General who was GEN Walter Krueger, Commanding General of Sixth Army. He looked at me and he said, "How are you getting along?" I said, "Fine General, but I need help." I hadn't shaved for several days; I was dirty being on duty constantly and I apologized for my appearance, but told him that I just couldn't leave that station because I had to report to the Japanese as each troop unit came ashore. He said, "Well, what do you need?" I said, "You've got a railway operating battalion out there somewhere on one of those ships. Can I get some help from them?" He turned to MG Decker who was sitting in the jeep with him and he said, "Get him everything he needs." I'll never forget that, my first of many encounters with GEN Krueger and I could speak a long time as to my great admiration for the gentleman. He's gone now -- been dead many years -- a great soldier and a great commander. He immediately got several officers of this railway operating battalion brought ashore and assigned to me and I was able to get some rest. I'd been

living on C-rations long enough. Many times after that when I saw GEN Krueger, he was very kind and very much impressed with the job we did. In fact, when I got back to America to report back to the Pennsylvania Railroad, the president had received a letter from GEN Krueger commending me, which was one of the finest compliments I could've had when I returned to a civilian railway -- to have GEN Krueger write the president of that company a letter about the service I rendered. So naturally, you understand my great feeling of appreciation. GEN Krueger scared me to death one time. Then BG Frank S. Besson, Jr sent some of his emperor's equipment down to Kyoto for me to use when GEN Krueger made a trip. When GEN Krueger came down to make his first trip on this perfectly beautiful train, the Japanese had it equipped with the finest of everything, from silver to linens to goblets to flowers all over it. GEN Krueger looked at it and said, "I won't use this thing. They don't treat me this way in America." My heart was in my throat. I didn't know what to say. He walked a little further and, he said, "Who would use this if I don't?" I said, "Sir, this is the Emperor's equipment that he, and only he, would use, and he isn't allowed to use it any are, so if you don't use it, no one should." Well, the end of the story is, he used it, and I think enjoyed it.

**CPT BOYLE:** So, basically you operated alone in the beginning of the operation when the troops were coming ashore. What were the plans as far as establishing railroad operations? Was there just going to be one railroad operating battalion?

**MG RICE:** At that time, when we found how completely competent the Japanese were in operating trains and their desire to cooperate in every way with American forces. We had no problem with railroad operation at all, and I later set up a Headquarters in Kyoto in the station there, and I had certain personnel assigned to me. All we needed to do was to get the request from the G-4s of Sixth Army as to who to move where, or what materials would be moved from one point to another and tell the Japanese, and they took care of it. Also, we got into the problem then of taking all of the Japanese munitions and hauling them out to sea and dumping them. We had conquered them and we were disarming them completely. They did it. All we did was tell them and then we supervised them to be sure they were doing it. We had train after train of munitions hauled to the ports and loaded on a water transporter, then hauled out and dumped at sea. And I remember when the Emperor came to Kyoto to report to his forefathers on the stand of the empire. The Japanese came to me and asked if I would agree to stop the munitions trains while the train bearing the Emperor passed, because they were fearful of an explosion. Of course we did stop the trains on the side tracks and let the Emperor's train have the right-of-way. But that was one of the little things that going into Japan entailed and I made a reconnaissance of the railroads in the Sixth Army area which actually was everything south of Nagoya. All of that island and the other two islands of the empire was under Sixth Army and everything north of that was Eighth Army under GEN Robert L. Eichelberger. So I made a reconnaissance trip to Hiroshima and over to Nagasaki to see what we had and what had happened to the railways with the atomic bomb. So, it was a very revealing and educational experience to travel their Japanese railroad and shortly after the surrender, on the USS Missouri, to see the shape it was in, and to work with the Japanese rail operators in moving our troops all around in the Sixth Army area

where they were stationed. I have nothing but praise and commendation for the way they did it.

**CPT BOYLE:** After you left, did the basic railroad structure just consist of one headquarters unit working with the Japanese under the Commander of the Army?

**MG RICE:** That's right, I had no problems whatsoever.

**CPT BOYLE:** What was the condition of the Philippine railroad line while you were there preparing for the invasion of Japan?

**MG RICE:** The Filipinos were nothing like as efficient as the Japanese. The ones that we saw at that time did not have the motivation that the Japanese did in any respect. We were bringing in vast quantities of every type of implement of war in subsistence, so that you could imagine the piles of supplies being unloaded from American ships in Manila and transported out to storage areas. Planning for the invasion and occupation of Japan was tremendous and the Filipino labor forces were very, very inadequate as compared to Japanese, and frankly, the railroads were in the same condition. They had been damaged by war, of course, but so had the Japanese railroads, but the Filipinos were not motivated and the Japanese were. There was a great difference in their desire to get a job done which was very marked insofar as contrasting the two.

**CPT BOYLE:** Did you then, as the plan for the Americans, have to take responsibility for a lot of the operations in the Philippines? Did the Americans actually have to run the railroads?

**MG RICE:** Yes, they had some American railroad operators there. I was very heavily involved in the planning for the invasion of Japan. But, since we were quartered together, I am aware they did have some American railroad operators and, as a result, I was not directly involved with the day-to-day operations in the Philippines. They were more or less letting the Filipino do most of it at that time, trying to supervise them but having considerable trouble as I understood it.

**CPT BOYLE:** General Rice, at this time I'm going to give you an opportunity to go ahead and make some closing comments. Exactly what do you feel right now is the major weakness in transportation in American Defense, and what role do you see the railroads playing in the future in our National Defense efforts?

**MG RICE:** After we came back to this country at the end of World War II, we were all very much impressed with the jobs the railroads had done in the various Theaters of Operation throughout the world. Of course, there was a large military railway service reserve component and it was my privilege to be the Commanding General of the Military Railway Service on a nation-wide basis. We had a headquarters and that headquarters went on annual active duty every year at Fort Eustis; the officer personnel came from various parts of America. As time went by, apparently the pals in the Pentagon became less interested in railroads, and more with atomic warfare and air

transports. As a result, the railroads gradually began to take a back seat. Consequently, the Military Railway Service per se, gradually lost its identity, and as far as I know now, although I've been retired for many years, nothing today compares with it. Now what does that mean? That means that if there were an outbreak of war in Europe or the Middle East, somebody will have to supply the troops if there are ground forces involved. You hear certain people who are involved say, "Well, it'll all be done in the air." That, in my mind, is not complete thinking on the part of those who make these decisions. If we use ground forces, we will necessarily have to use some type of ground transport to supply them, and there is no way that we can move tonnages of the volume required other than by rail. Now, there are those who say, "We can go to the American railroads and enlist and draft the people we need who are capable of running the railroads," and that is true, you can get the technical skill there. But, these people have not been trained in the basic fundamental concepts of military service. They wouldn't understand it; they have had no training in it. Consequently, the various things that make up a military unit; from running a mess hall, to military discipline, to ways to wear the uniform, to the morning report that the company officers are responsible for, would be completely lost. They would know absolutely nothing about it. That is the reason that I feel that while we do have the skills in civilian occupations that could run a railroad, to run one in a Theater of Operation under a General and the various staffs of the combat units would be terribly difficult because we don't have any Reserve units, to my knowledge, that are constantly keeping abreast of developments, and are trained how to defend themselves. That is something else that would be so important. These people would have no idea how to defend themselves from enemy attack or how to use a rifle, or any of the many, many things that they would have learned and been drilled in constantly in the Reserve Corps. As a former reservist, as a formal General Officer in the Reserves, I feel that we are making a grave error in not utilizing the talent that we have in the American railroads; by giving them some active duty training each year, and by enlisting them as possible soldiers to be called on to serve on active duty. They must not only know how to run a railroad, but know how to fit it into an Army life. That's my thinking.

**CPT BOYLE:** Thank you, General Rice.