ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

Lieutenant General Edward S. Fris, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)

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Major Frank M. Batha, USMC
Interviewers

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HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION
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FOREWORD

This typescript, the transcribed memoir of Lieutenant General Edward S. Fris, USMC (Ret), results from a series of recorded interviews conducted with him at the Marine Corps Historical Center on 22 September 1980, and 13 January 1981 for the Marine Corps Oral History Program. This program obtains, by means of tape-recorded interviews, primary source material to augment documentary evidence.

Oral History is essentially spoken history, the oral recall of eyewitness impressions and observations recorded accurately on tape in the course of an interview conducted by a historian or an individual employing historical methodology and, possibly, the techniques of a journalist. The final product is a verbatim transcript containing historically valuable personal narratives relating to noteworthy professional experiences and observations from active duty, reserve, and retired Marines.

General Fris has read the transcript and made only minor corrections and emendations. The reader is asked to bear in mind, therefore, that he is reading a transcript of the spoken rather than the written word. General Fris has placed a restriction of OPEN on the use of his interview transcripts. This means that a potential user may read the transcript upon presentation of appropriate credentials.

Copies of this memoir are deposited in the Marine Corps Oral History Collection, History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., and Breckinridge Library, Marine Air-Ground Training and Education Center, Quantico, Virginia.

E. H. SIMMONS
Brigadier General
U.S. Marine Corps (Ret)
Director of Marine Corps
History and Museums

LIEUTENANT GENERAL EDWARD S. FRIS

Edward S. Fris was born September 1, 1921, in Orient, Illinois and graduated from Community High School in 1939. He received his BS degree in Electrical Engineering and was commissioned a Marine Corps Reserve second lieutenant upon graduation from the Missouri School of Mines, February 2, 1943.

He completed the Reserve Officers' Course, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, in June 1943, then successively attended the Naval Training Schools at Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Radar Maintenance Course, Camp Murphy, Florida. He was promoted to first lieutenant, June 1944.

During World War II, General Fris served at Cherry Point, North Carolina, as a radar officer with the 9th Marine Aircraft Wing, and later with Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, in Hawaii.

Upon his return to the United States in January 1946, he entered flight training at Corpus Christi, Texas. He integrated into the regular Marine Corps, received his wings and was designated a naval aviator upon completion of flight training at Pensacola, Florida on June 27, 1947. He was promoted to captain the following August.

After completing advanced training at the Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida, he was assigned to the Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro (Santa Ana), California for duty as Personnel and Flight Officer with Marine Fighter Squadron 312, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. He later served as Executive Officer of Base Headquarters Squadron, also at El Toro.

He completed the Amphibious Warfare School, Junior Course, Quantico in December 1950, remaining at Quantico through June 1951 as a Special Services Officer at the Air Station. He completed the U.S. Naval Postgraduate Schools at Annapolis, Maryland and Monterey, California in November 1951 and June 1954, respectively. He was promoted to major in June 1952.

General Fris was underwent refresher pilot training at El Toro, with Marine Fighter Squadron 10, from June to October 1954, when he was transferred to Korea as Executive Officer, Marine Fighter Squadron 115, 1sr Marine Aircraft Wing, and later served as Electronics Officer, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. In December 1955, he was reassigned to the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing, Cherry Point, North Carolina, as an electronics officer.

In June 1957, General Fris reported to Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., for duty as Head, Aviation Electronics Logistic Section, Division of Aviation, for three

years. he was promoted to lieutenant colonel in January 1959, and in July 1960 became Marine Corps Liaison Officer with Litton Industries in Los Angeles, California.

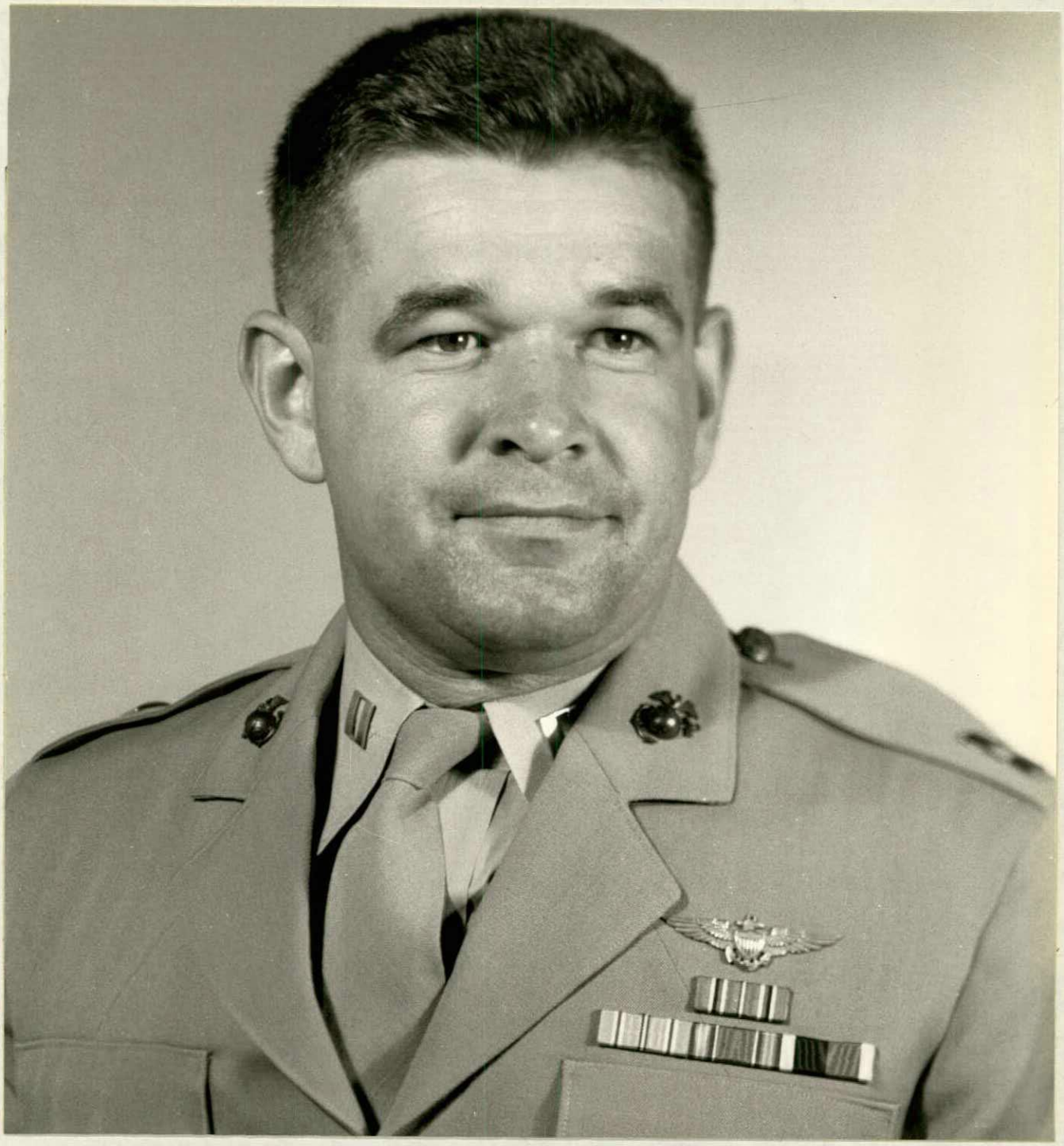
From September 1961 until February 1965, he served as Commanding Officer, Marine Air Control Squadron 3, Marine Corps Air Facility, Santa Ana, California. He returned to Washington, D.C. in March 1965, and served as Head, Marine Corps and Amphibious Electronics Branch, Electronics Division, Bureau of Ships. While serving in this capacity, he was promoted to colonel in July 1965. General Fris was reassigned to Headquarters Marine Corps in August 1966 as Head, Aviation Command, Control, and Communications Branch, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff (Air).

He was ordered to the Republic of Vietnam in July 1968, as Commanding Officer, Marine Air Control Group 18, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. Upon his return to the United States, he was promoted to brigadier general on August 22, 1969, and designated Inspector General of the Marine Corps until July 1970, when he assumed duty as Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff (Programs).

Detached from Headquarters Marine Corps in October 1971, he reported to El Toro, where he commanded the Marine Corps Air Bases, Western Area/Marine Corps Air Station. Following his promotion to major general on August 25, 1972, he returned to Headquarters Marine Corps and served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Aviation. Following his advancement to lieutenant general on August 27, 1974, he became Commanding General, Marine Corps Development and Education Command, Quantico, remaining in that billet until his retirement on September 1, 1975. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal upon retirement.

A complete list of General Fris' decorations includes the Distinguished Service Medal; the Legion of Merit with one gold star; the Navy Commendation Medal; the Presidential Unit Citation; the American Campaign Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; the World War II Victory Medal; the Navy Occupation Service Medal with Asia Clasp; the National Defense Service Medal with one bronze star; the Vietnam Service Medal with two bronze stars; and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

LtGen Edward S. Fris, 30 Aug 74.



Captain Edward S. Fris, September 1950

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LtGen Fris presents a plaque to VAdm Sobhon Suyarnsestakorn, Commandant, Royal Thai Marine Corps on 23 May 1975

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Interviewer: Major Frank Batha,
Duty Aviator, History Museums Division

Place of Interview: Washington, D.C.

Date of Interview: 22 September 1980 and 13 January 1981

Session I - 22 September 1980

Tape 1, Side 1

Frank: This is an interview with Lieutenant General Edward S. Fris, USMC, Retired. The date of this interview is 22 September 1980. It is being held in the Marine Corps Historical Center in Washington Navy Yard. Accompanying me on the interview is Major Frank Batha, who is the duty aviator historian in the History and Museums Division.

As we indicated in our correspondence to you, General, we want to talk about the MTDS, what does it do, how does it work, how it began, et cetera, and it's all yours.

Fris: Okay. Well, first, I guess, in describing what it is, it's a semi-automatic air defense and air control system that takes inputs from radars, locally-sited radars, and radars that are remotely sited and the information sent into it. It

takes information from airfields, from the MATCU and the flight plans and what have you. It takes information from the operations offices of the wing, wherever the frag order is sent out. It also takes information from the missile units, the Hawk missile units that are assigned to the same unit. It takes information from airborne tactical data systems, the Navy Airborne Tactical Data System. These are the radar inputs and stuff that are picked up by that airborne system. It takes information from the Navy Tactical Data System, but the Navy has its own system, and then it has its own targets, radar targets, and what have you that are sent to the MTDS system.

Now, all of this system, then, is collated with--all of this information is collated within the MTDS and then presented on a scope for the controller, the air traffic controller, and the air defense controller to do his job of providing for air defense and providing for control of the--all of the aircraft within the area. Now, he is also provided the communications within the system, and it's all readily available to him right there at the particular scope that he is sitting at, and these are either voice or automatic digital data communications.

If the airplane is equipped with the proper equipment he can automatically or the system automatically sends controlling information, altitude to fly, direction to fly, information on where the target is, and what have you. It will go automatically, and if the system is so equipped in the aircraft, it will automatically fly the airplane to the right headings, altitude, or what have you.

Frank: Is this strictly a defensive system?

Fris: It is strictly--a defensive system--I would say yes. There are a few offensive things that take on, but it's just the controlling of the aircraft. For instance, if aircraft are going to an area to provide close air support or to a TPQ-10 that's going to do the bomb dropping and what have you, it does send the airplanes out there, but then that is taken over, the function, then, is taken over by the controller there at the forward area and the controller within the MTDS has no control over that whatsoever. And then when the airplanes are through there it picks them up and then is controlled back through this system and back to the base.

Frank: It also takes input from a reporting site, airborne--

Fris: The airborne, that's the Airborne Tactical Data System.

Frank: ATDS.

Fris: Right. Now, they have their own radar. They have their own system, and the targets that are available to them that they see over the horizon that the MTDS radars cannot see, it sends the information back on those. Now, there's another thing that--they will have certain targets in their radar coverage that the MTDS would also have, and then this system actually discriminates between these two and makes sure that they are not painted as two targets. It's just painted as one target.

Frank: And this one guy, the operator at the scope has everything in his view?

Fris: Everything within his view. As a matter of fact, an electronic map is also painted on there. There's a hut in the system where they take a photograph of a map and they can put that electronic map on there, and they can put in anything that they want in that electronic map. For instance, the controller can, right there at the scope, can put in way points or what have you where he wants aircraft to fly over that particular point. He can put that in there. That is considered one of the tracks in the system. It stays right there presented to him and he uses it all the time.

Now, what it does, really, is gathers all of this information and presents it to him so that he doesn't have to go with grease pencils tracking the aircraft and what have you, taking all of his valuable time doing that, thinking time, and he's left free, then, to make decisions on where the aircraft should go.

Frank: Not like the old reverse map Air Control System.

Fris: Right. What it did was eliminated that. It just presented to them there on a real time basis because the system actually automatically tracks the--it will automatically detect the target, a radar target. The radar is piped right into it. It will automatically detect the target. It will automatically

decode the IFF code that that target has if it's a friendly, and it will classify it, present it to the man, and if he wants to change it, if he wants to change any of that information, he has the facility there also to do that. He doesn't have to accept their particular input. And, as an example, in radars they always have a ground return near the radar, and that comes as one big sort of blob of information there, and it's awful hard for even the controller to see when an airplane is passing through there whether or not that blip is really a radar blip. Well, the system itself can't track through that at all, so the operator, human operator, then, can what they call rate-aid track and he can move it through there, and then when he gets through that thing it will automatically pick it up and automatically track it again.

Frank: All right. Let's give an example. For instance, say this had been available in World War II aboard a carrier, task force carrier which was the--held the flag--and in one of the major battles, a group of Japanese were coming in, what would--how would it react and what would it do? What would it give to the say, the CAP?

Fris: Okay. In the first place, that raid would have to be detected by our radars.

Frank: Okay.

Fris: They are coming in now. We know and they have been classified as enemy aircraft, so the CAP is up there, and, of course, they also have them on strip alert or on deck alert. What they will do, then, is the controller, then, sees that coming in. He knows what he has available to him to fight those enemy aircraft, so he will send them in either by voice control and tell them to go that way or if the aircraft is so equipped again, it will send automatic communications to that aircraft and will even if it's automatically controlled, if it has the automatic pilot in it with the required receivers and what have you to gather this information from the controller, it will actually send the airplane out in that direction and the pilot sits there and watches it.

Frank: But the factor of it is there is still a controller, a human being--

Fris: Always.

Frank: --has to make the decision of how this raid is going to be counteracted, how many ships are going to go, what vector to take, et cetera.

Fris: Exactly.

Frank: There's always a human in it.

Fris: And he monitors this and he can--now, while--for instance, if it's an automatic thing, that controller sits there and all of the information that's going to the airplane automatically is presented to him, the heading that the guy is flying--

Frank: The altitude.

Fris: --the altitude, the speed. It will tell him the speed of the enemy coming in and--

Frank: Not types of aircraft or anything?

Fris: No, it will say enemy and it will give them as an enemy, and he won't know the type of aircraft.

Frank: Well, has there anything been--I may be in a fantasyland, but isn't there something developed which takes this information and then automatically will crank out the type of weaponry to be used, how it's to be counteracted, et cetera?

Fris: Well, with this particular system, now, you can do that. You can have it set up to where it will say "Okay, we're going to make a head-on approach to this thing." Now, in our system we have the controller determine that because he sat throughout the testing. He says, "I can do this better than the automatic threat evaluation can do it." So if it's going to be a head-on one, he's going to use, in those days

anyway, was a radar controlled missile, or if it had time to make a tail-on approach, why, he would use a Side-Winder type missile, so he had the choice of which weapon to use, the controller did, down on the ground.

Frank: Uh huh. Okay. Frank?

Batha: Well, right. I just wanted to get into some of the things that I've come across in a historical sense. The Marine Corp's MTDS system was the required interface between the Navy and the Air Force in Vietnam, and I have kind of lost track, I haven't finished my research, but it appears to me we were using a detachment of H&HS-18 to provide the personnel. I just wanted to confirm that. Did they, after the MACS units and a control group pull-out stay on Monkey Mountain?

Fris: Yes, they did. And, as a matter of fact, even went over to, was it Pnom Penh?

Batha: Namphong.

Fris: Namphong. They went over there and actually tested the equipment there to see whether or not it would receive it from the Navy, and they found out that it did receive it and so they kept it in storage there in case they had to move to Namphong.

Batha: I hadn't tracked that down yet. I wondered, when we did pull out with the Vietnamization, did we leave the Vietnamese air force with our equipment?

Fris: No, not with our equipment.

Batha: But with the same capability? Did they have the capability?

Fris: Oh, no, unh uh.

Batha: So at some point, then, when the Marine Corps left, the Air Force, then, had a sort of a black area between--since they were still working out of Thailand themselves, there was a black area or no interface between themselves and the Vietnamese air space?

Fris: I really don't know the specifics of this thing, but the capability wasn't there for them, for the South Vietnamese because when the Air Force moved over to there, moved out from Monkey Mountain, why, that was everything. See, the Air Force was on Monkey Mountain first, and there is quite a history to it in getting that MTDS into Vietnam and onto Monkey Mountain because the Air Force objected to it. They tried to kill our program from the word go because they felt that they should be the ones developing equipment like that and not any other service. They were the Air Force and that was that.

Frank: But were they?

Fris: Were they what?

Frank: Developing it?

Fris: They developed all kinds of them, but they never really developed anything that worked. As a matter of fact, when we started our system, in fact, I got sent to Headquarters, Marine Corps, from the 2d Wing in 1957. I think--yes, the summer of '57 I got sent. I think I reported in July, 1957.

Frank: That's right.

Fris: And the contract had just been signed--

Frank: For the development--

Fris: --for the development of this system, the development contract. They were developing what they called a test complex, and this was a TAOC. A TACC which was the wing command monitoring outfit, and then what they called this beach relay that made it compatible with the Navy Tactical Data System. That was in July of 1957. At the same time there was a study group that the Marine Corps had hired, and these were some pretty talented people from different parts of industry that knew the technology and what have you and they were asked to study the thing and see just exactly what the Marine Corps should build.

Well, all this time the Air Force, then, said that they wanted to build a system, and we, of course, stayed out of that thing completely. That was their business as far as we saw it. We

knew what we wanted. Well, I think it was in the fall of 1958, somewhere around there, we had a phone call from DOD and said come on over, that you've got to come over and defend your system. The Air Force says they're going to build one that you guys can use also. Well, by the fall of 1958 we had already started with some hardware. We had a man in a plant out there on the west coast and what have you. We already had hardware being built. We knew exactly what we were going to do, so we felt that we should go over to DOD, of course, and defend our position on this thing, and we, in fact, asked a gentleman who had nothing to do with the MTDS, Col Ross Mickey who was in aviation at the time. Col Ross Mickey, we briefed him on the thing, and he went over to make the pitch. He's a very persuasive gentleman, very sharp, and I think he's with Grumman Aircraft now or was with Grumman for a long time.

But, anyway, he goes over there and gives our pitch, and what he was defending was the Air Force's position who had the backing of DOD, that, look, we're going to build this system and all they had was what we call a bunch of cocktail brochures. They had a bunch of things that G.E. put out and said that this is the system we're going to build for the Air Force and you can use it too. I think they called it the 407L at the time, so the DOD, then, said, okay, after Col Mickey gave his pitch and what have you, why, they said, "Okay, we'll let you go ahead and continue with your program because what the Air Force is

building isn't going to be as mobile or anything like that that you need." So they let us continue with our program. In the meantime, the Air Force was building that 407L, and they wanted it so badly and they wanted it to be deployed over in Germany so badly that they really went full bore on this thing without any testing or anything else, and I guess there was even going to be sort of an international incident with Germany if they didn't deliver the equipment because Germany had built all of the cement blockhouses and everything else in which this thing was to be put in, so they finally delivered it over there, and I was told by a man, a lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps that went over there on a visit--he was with BuShips at the time--that G.E. had to hire an entire hotel and had 500 engineers over there working on that thing to try to make it work. It was really a--and it was a massive thing, a big, huge thing.

Well, then that one didn't work, and they sort of fell off of it. In the meantime, DOD is monitoring the progress on our system quite closely, and I know while we were testing it out there we had all kinds of visitors, from DOD, from the other services, from Japan, Belgium, we had people always coming in to visit to see the progress on this thing.

Frank: Who built this, by the way, on the coast?

Fris: Litton Industries.

Frank: Litton, that's right.

Fris: Litton Industries.

Frank: Yes.

Fris: So in the meantime, then, the Air Force had two colonels, two Air Force colonels, assigned to DOD working directly for Dr. Foubini, and these two colonels were feeding him all kinds of information on how bad the system is and why it won't work in the Navy. Then we were constantly defending the program with Dr. Foubini. And, as a matter of fact, when we had a contract, the production contract, was a fixed price production contract which is a real good one to get, and they finally decided, DOD decided, that we're going to cancel part of it. In fact, they were going to cancel the whole thing until you can prove that this first system you're building works.

They went ahead, and, as I say, had plans of canceling certain numbers of it, and we kept insisting that if you cancel that contract, it's going to break the contract. We've got a fixed price on it, and it's going to cost us a lot more millions of dollars if you do that. They went ahead and did it anyway. It seems to me they canceled about five of the systems, and then through our testing we proved to them that the thing would work. As a result, they said, okay, you have authority now to go ahead and reinstate those other systems. Well, we did, but it cost us I've forgotten how many million dollars, several million dollars to reinstate the ones that they had broken the contract on.

But the Air Force in the meantime, then, was going to build another system. This was the 412L system. I think it was a 412L system. And they contracted with Hughes Aircraft to build that, and Hughes finally--I've been told by some people that Hughes lost $30 million on that thing. They spent their own money because they wanted to make this thing go, but that system never did get anywhere either. To my knowledge, the Air Force still doesn't have a tactical, semiautomatic air defense and air control system. Maybe they do. I don't know.

Batha: Yes, sir. To follow up because our job is not only to look at history, but to look into the future, we now have a fairly good NADGE system which incorporates the MTDS, and that's the NATO Air Ground Defense system, and I wondered if while you were DC/S (Air) in this developmental stage started looking at that aspect of it, about us actually incorporating our system with the NATO defense requirements.

Fris: Well, yes. In fact, that's why we had the visitors from NATO to this thing, and then from Japan. The Japanese Self Defense Air Force was building the system. In fact, I think Hughes built that system out there for them and they used our beach relay again in order--because they had to get the information from the U.S. Navy in there, and they used our particular beach relay for that one. But in that NADGE system there was a lot of competition, and, of course, I am sure that the reason we got a lot of their visitors, I'm sure

our squadron personnel, with the thing to operate and maintain it while we train your people in our schools--we set up our own schools and what have you--while we train your technical people and controllers, and then you can gradually take the thing over." And we already had it built, but, of course, again, the Air Force was doing everything they could to stay away from the MTDS, and they decided to go in there with a revamped BUIC system, the BackUp Interset Control for the SAGE system around the U.S. So, they said, "No, we're going to go ahead and take that one and put it on our site there on Monkey Mountain," which they did. I know that when I left Washington they had already spent $87 million on trying to rework that system to fit on this mountain, and then when I got out there they were building a blockhouse, really, for the thing, and because it was so susceptible to interference from radars they had to put in copper wire, copper screen wire throughout the whole thing. It was a terrifically expensive thing, and still, when they got it, the only thing they had was a display. They had no control capability or anything else from it which they could have had from ours.

In the meantime, then, they had asked our people if they could have two of their controllers come over and man two of our scopes on Monkey Mountain, and they would send information, the targets that they were interested in, back over to their system, and, so, we said yes. I was in Washington at the time, and I remember there was a review of some kind about what was going on with the program and what have you, and I

that Litton Industries, the sales people of Litton Industries, were telling all of these people all kinds of stories about their system and invited them out to see it, and we did, we let them see it. We would give them briefings on it, let them see the equipment and what have you.

The same thing with Japan. In fact, I went over to Japan in June of '61, I think, with Litton, and there were two other contractors that were given a presentation to the Japanese Self Defense Air Force on letting them make up their mind as to which system they thought would be the best one to go with.

Now, there was another thing that we got involved in with the Air Force when they were on Monkey Mountain, and they wanted that information from the Navy, and they had no way of getting the information from the Navy, so suddenly, I guess, the JCS got involved in this thing and they said that they wanted to do something about getting in the system to get that Navy information plus some highly classified information that NSA had that they wanted to feed into the thing. In fact, I went over and gave the briefing to the JCS on the thing, and at that time we had our second system. Our first system went out, I think it was with MACS-4 out to Monkey Mountain. Our second system was going to go, I believe it was MACS-8 down at--I've forgotten just where the location was now, but, anyway, we offered the Air Force that second system intact. We said, "Look, you can take this second--we'll give you this second system. We will send our people,

guess I had made mention in the review, in this letter that we sent over, I had made mention of the fact that the Air Force on Monkey Mountain was, in fact, using two of those scopes. I told my people, I said, "Now, you watch, I'll bet you that within a week those guys will give up those two scopes in there," and, sure enough, they got the word from Headquarters, Air Force, here to "Get those guys the hell out of there, we don't want them working on the MTDS equipment."

Now, the guys in the field wanted it, see, they wanted to use it, and we gave them the opportunity to, but when they--when it was made known back here, well, these guys evidently sent word out immediately and said to get out of there.

Frank: The MTDS did not just grow out of the ground like Topsy. What was the predecessor system?

Fris: Now, the only system we had prior to that was the grease pencil system. We had radar scopes and we had a control center where we had these scopes, and the guys would get the radar information in there and it was a grease pencil on the scope also. He would make his marks and track the aircraft, both friendly and enemy, and erase them all the time and everything. It was much more difficult for the controller to do that, so what had happened then, and I don't know where the technology came, but in my mind there were three officers here at Headquarters, Marine Corps, that really were the instigators of the thing. One was LtCol Bob Cochran who had the Aviation Electronics

Branch at Headquarters, Marine Corps, and he was a technical man, and real brilliant, and he tried all kinds of things, and he was trying to improve radars constantly. He's the one that came up with the--this para-balloon antenna. A lot of people laughed at it and what have you, but it was a good try because all you had to do was look at a radar equation and you can see that if you increased the gain of the antenna, you've really increased the range of a radar, and this is what he was trying to do. But the way to increase the gain of the antenna of course, is to make it bigger, and the Marines couldn't put up with that heavy weight and stuff, so he figured, well, why can't we have an air pouch, so to speak, paint the back of it with a reflective paint. It would be lightweight and what have you, and we tested the thing, and it didn't work out too well, but, as I say, he did real well at it.

But he--the branch at that time was called AAE--and then there was a major in there, Bob Peebles, Robert R. Peebles, and Bob Peebles was a controller. In fact, he had MACS-3, I think it was, in Korea, and he moved them a couple of times. He ended up at Pohang, I guess, but he was very knowledgeable in the air control area, and he knew what the limitations were of our particular system. And then the third man was a Col Al Jones who was over in the communications electronics area, and he was first pushing the monies from that viewpoint. But those three men are the ones that really pushed it and got it going, and they are the ones that really started it,

in my view, because when I got there, as I say, the contract had just been signed, and then I was put right in the middle of the thing to go from there and work with Bob Peebles and Bob Cochran and Al Jones.

Frank: Was Litton the only industry that had achieved the state of the art and able to know--

Fris: No. The reason they went with Litton Industries I am told is Litton Industries had a contract for the airborne tactical data system with the Navy. Now, when you build an airborne system, then you're going to build pretty small components, you have to. So the Marine Corps felt, well, now that's the place we ought to go because they're going to be building that and we could probably use a lot of the components that they're using in that one in our system and we will gain an awful lot through this--going with this one company.

Frank: Prior to your assignment as the project officer, you handled a number of assignments in aviation electronics, and I note from your career you got into it quite early. You went to MIT and you went to postgraduate school at Annapolis, and so on. Was this your field in college?

Fris: Yes. I graduated in electrical engineering.

Frank: Electrical engineering. So this suited you to a "T."

Fris: Oh, yes. No, it just continued right on, right on through.

Frank: Okay. Did any of these assignments that you had prior to becoming the project officer involve--were they involved with the development of the original concept of the MTDS or--

Fris: Well, no. I was during World War II--in fact, before I went to flight training, and this was after MIT and what have you, and then the Army radar school down in Florida, and I was assigned to a--they called them air warning squadrons in those days. I was assigned as a radar officer in an air warning squadron

Frank: That's right.

Fris: And I was with that squadron for a couple of years, so I learned the whole thing, the control area and the whole system, and I could certainly, you know, was able to see the handicaps that we were--

Frank: Yes, the concept of this whole thing and--

Fris: Yes.

Frank: You were involved with this from '57, for 11 years or more. What were some of the problems, and I'm sure there were

quite a few of them which every time you turned, I imagine, until the thing was actually operational.

Fris: Well, I would say--listing the problems first is just--problem areas. One was in keeping the project funded, R&D funds, because the Marine Corps had never gotten involved in anything like this, this size, scope, and the amount of dollars. That was one area. The other area was in the testing of the equipment and I guess inter-Marine Corps problems with--well, when you test a piece of equipment like that, if the test results aren't coming back too good, the people back in Washington have trouble selling the people on continuing, and we had some definite problems in this area, and we had some people problems, some that--where you would probably question the loyalty of a lot of people to the Marine Corps versus loyalty to the contractor.

Frank: Oh, really?

Fris: Oh, yes, and then we had the problems of--I'll come back to these if you like.

Frank: Yes, I'd like--well, discuss them as you go, if you will.

Fris: Yes. And then we also had the problems with the Air Force that I briefly went over, again, where the Air Force was just fighting us all the time. And then the other problem

people-wise was the problem where you have that the technical people want to insist on force feeding the equipment, and I can say this truthfully because I'm the technical side, but they tried to force feed the air controller certain functions that he doesn't even want, and he's the guy that's experienced and he's the one that this whole equipment is built for. The whole equipment is built to present the air picture to this guy on the scope so that he can best do his job, and for some reason the technical people keep insisting on "No, you're not going to get that. We're going to give you this," or "You really don't want that. You want this other thing." And that caused a lot of problems also in the testing.

But I guess, to start off with, one of the big problems was in the funding. Now, I think they signed the contract, it seems to me that it was just under $5 million for the R&D part on that test complex, and it also seems to me that--$4.9 million--and it finally stretched out: the last that I recall was around $35 million in just R&D dollars. So this caused a lot of consternation within the Marine Corps. First off, you know, this is an awfully complicated system, and it was alleged that Marines are never going to be able to operate and maintain it. It was a cost plus fixed fee contract so that every time you needed more time, the contractor would come in and say, "We need this much more dollars," and what have you, and this much more time, and they're always playing games with the technical bureaus back here on how should we present this the best to keep the program alive rather than

killing it. So that was a big area, and then there was a colonel--I can't think of his name right now-Bob Mitchell, Col Bob Mitchell, that replaced this other colonel that started the thing off, and Bob Mitchell, he was a brilliant guy. Bob Mitchell was really sharp technically, and he had a lot of guts, and he is quite a salesman, and he's the one back here that really kept selling Gen Hochmuth and then Gen Kyle after that on keeping more dollars in the program.

So, as I say, that was a big problem area all the time. I remember Gen Shoup even at one time had a cartoon made up for Gen Hochmuth and it was a big alligator and it had Gen Hochmuth shoving these dollar bills in this alligator's mouth, and on the alligator was printed MTDS, and it said something to the effect that that's all 'til later, alligator, or something like that, you know, like the old saying. But, anyway, that was a big problem.

The other problem was that Quantico was, of course, is our testing outfit, and Quantico was wanting to back out of the test. They said that, "We don't have the facilities, we don't have the people. You're going to have to take a whole control squadron to do it, so why don't we go talk to AirFMPac because they're close to the plant there on the west coast and see if we can't talk them into taking over the testing of the thing and they be responsible for the testing." So, in fact, we flew out on an airplane and Col Lassiter, a ground officer, I guess--I don't know what job he had in the Development Center--Col Jake Baker, an aviator--and a bunch

of us went out there and we talked to Gen Carson Roberts who had the AirFMPac at that time and they talked him into being the poppa of the thing. They said, "Okay, we'll take MACS-3 that was out there and we'll use all of its radars and what have you, but it will not now be an operational squadron. It will be a test unit." So they accepted it out there, and so it was set up to go that way, and then when I finished my tour here in the summer of 1960 the idea was that I would go to the plant to relieve Col Ed Harper who was the plant rep at that time, and then shortly the thing was supposed to come out of there and be ready for test to go down to Santa Ana, and then the plan was that I would move on down and be the CO of the test unit which, in fact, did happen.

Well, when we went down there with the equipment, and if I can recall correctly, it must have been in August or September of 1961, we took the --

Frank: MACS-3, September, '61.

Fris: Okay, so it was in September of '61 we got the equipment down there and started testing it, and we had all kinds of technical problems with it, and we would try to work with the contractor on the thing, on getting the technical problems resolved, and we were really having a rough time, and we were not getting the support from the people back here, and I didn't understand. I never could understand it. In fact, that was the one area where I was very naive, I guess, figuring

that they're going to do everything they can to really support us, and I'm talking about the Bureau of the Ships back here. At that time it was the Bureau of the Ships, now NAVELEX.

But, as I say, we had several technical problems and one real bad one, and this one real bad technical problem was--and I'm going to get into it just a little bit in naming it--anyway, it was a drum servo that synchronized the speed of this magnetic drum. It was a big magnetic drum. It synchronized the speed of that to the pulse repetition frequency, the PRF, of the radar. Well, that drum servo was a very poor design, and it was awfully hard to even align, to tune up, and it was very touchy, and any little thing would throw it out of whack, and then the whole system would quit. I mean the scope would just go to muckets.

Well, we tried everything in the world to try to get them to correct that thing. The contractor kept saying no, and they had a tech rep in that 1 hut--it was called a type 1 hut-he was in that hut, and every time we would start a test and that damn thing would go out of synch, and he would walk out of the hut and he said, "It's the damn radar, it's the damn radar." He always pointed toward the radar, and we kept insisting that it wasn't. Now, we had a warrant officer there, Chuck Hoffman, and WO Hoffman worked --he moonlighted at night, I guess--at a small engineering electronics firm there in Santa Ana, and he with some of the engineers in there went over this design of the drum servo that we had, that Litton had built for us, and they redesigned

it and they said, "That thing can't possibly work that you have in there. It couldn't possibly work." And, again, we did everything we knew working with the Bureau of Ships, with the contractor, trying to get them convinced that that was the problem and get hot on it and get it straightened out and then we can really proceed with the testing, and we failed miserably for a whole year. A whole year went by before we could even get them convinced that this was the problem. They finally said, "Okay, that's the problem." We were sitting with this one guy one time at lunchtime, the engineer that designed it, and he said, "It was the wrong design in the first place." This was after a year that we're fighting with them on this, so they finally redesigned that drum servo. They put that thing in there, and we never had another problem with it. It was a simple design like this warrant officer, this Marine warrant officer, said to design it, and we never had another problem, and from then on everything went up. It looked good.

Now, we had a lot of other problems, technical problems, too. For instance, any time that there was a change that had to be put in it, it had to be wire changes because this was a wired computer. It wasn't a programmable computer, otherwise by just changing the programs. To change the program you had to change the wires.

Frank: Sort of a transistor board, something like that?

stating that we do have these problems and what have you, but we do feel that most of them can be resolved and that we would recommend that you go into contract for only one production system. And they assured us that if they went into contract for one production system that we could make changes in the system and what have you as we found the problems in this test item.

So we talked to General Roberts about the thing and convinced him that, yes, it might be a good--so long as we have this particular safety valve, that we can stop what they're doing and put in these changes to make it a workable system. So he went ahead and signed out the message. We worked up the message together and he signed it out. And this was before June of '62, I guess, that we had to do that. And then we were called up to the plant one time. They were going to have a program review on this production contract that they had or a contract review or post award conference or something. I've forgotten what they called it. But we went up there and I found out through lieutenant colonel at the Bureau of Ships that they didn't sign a contract for one system. They signed for all of them, and I really got upset because we sat there and told General Roberts that it's going to be one system and we have control over the thing, and so we won't get into a real mess, but they, back here, then, took that message and they signed a contract for all of the systems. We really got upset, and so, myself and my people got together and sat down and wrote a letter and told them why we thought that

Fris: Well, it had transistor boards, but the back of these bays, bays of transistor boards. I mean when you got behind there and it would look like a rat's nest, and it scared a lot of people, just the sight of that, saying you could never operate and maintain anything like that, so it did scare a lot of people. But they never one time came down with a change that worked, a wire change. In fact, one time, I've never forgotten, there was a 13-wire change this one time that they came down, put it in, and it didn't work. Every time they changed something in the program, it affected something else and they had to redo the damn thing. And it bothered us in that if we had this thing in the field and you had to go in and put a change in, you'd be out of commission for several days, and you just couldn't afford that in a combat situation.

So, anyway, the fight with them and with the Bureau of Ships--and we had another really bad problem, and it was over the fact, I guess, that the people here felt that we were not progressing fast enough on the testing to get some positive good results in order that they could go ahead and commit the money and the contract for the production equipment. The money was there, but it didn't look like they were going to make the end of testing on time to go into contract. So what they did then, the Headquarters Marine Corps people, and BuShips people came out there in a meeting, and we had the meeting with General Carson Roberts' staff and then finally briefed him on it because he had to make the decision. What they wanted to do was to ask us to come in with a message

that was a big mistake, and it was a long letter. There was a lot of technical stuff in it, and it was a pretty strong letter against that action that they had taken up there based on a promise of something else.

So, I remember Gen Kier was the CG there at the time, and Gen Kier had a lieutenant colonel over there who was sort of an MTDS officer for him on the staff, and he didn't want to even take it in to Gen Kier, and we insisted, "Yes, you've got to take it in to Gen Kier because Gen Roberts who was his predecessor was promised such and such, and he didn't get that." So it finally got into Gen Kier, and when Gen Kier called me, he said, "I'd like to come over and talk to you about this thing," and we discussed it, and he questioned me about a lot of these things, and he said, "Well," he said, "I agree with you that if that's the way the history was on this thing, I agree, and we ought to send the letter in." But he said, "Rather than me signing it, I think you ought to sign it because I don't know those technical details and they're going to know that I didn't write the letter. You sign it, and I'll put on a strong endorsement," which he did.

Well, after that we really got harassed from the Washington area, from Marines and civilians alike.

End Tape 1, Side 1

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Tape 1, Side 2

Fris: The next thing I knew we were at a meeting up at the Litton plant. I got questioned by the Marines from Headquarters and civilians and the Marines from BuShips, and it was almost like a court of inquiry. They were really getting into us on this thing, and why you're doing all of this and what have you, and then the next thing I know I guess Gen Kier said one day that Gen Greene was coming out. He was the Commandant at the time, was coming out to visit and would like a tour and a run-down on the testing. Evidently, Gen Kier had heard some things that I hadn't heard, and one was that when this group came back from out at that plant one of them wrote a trip report that was given to the G-4 at the time, it was Gen Chapman, I guess, and in it they recommended that the commanding officer of the test unit and the test director be relieved, that they are the ones that are causing all the problems in the program. Well, we were causing problems for the people back here who wanted real good results, success stories, and they kept asking for them, that "All you're doing is writing what's wrong with the equipment," and I said, "Well, that's all we got. I mean, it doesn't work, it just doesn't work, and we're not about to write and say that it does work."

So, anyway, evidently when this trip report got there, there was some action being taken or preparatory action

about relieving myself and also the test director who at that time was a captain, Hank Vitali, and then, evidently, they must have checked with Gen Kier because it was in his command, and the next thing I know, Gen Kier was talking to me about a lot of things that were going on up there. I never met a man with the perception, I think, that he had for--I mean, he was there and was in on what was going on, but the perception that he had on what was going on was fantastic to me because he picked out two areas that was causing problems for the Marine Corps, and he evidently wrote Gen Greene a letter and told Gen Greene that, "Until you do this you can just cancel the program as far as I'm concerned." One was to get a program director at the Headquarters Marine Corps level. At that time there were different offices working on that and what have you, and so he talked Gen Greene into getting somebody up there. He said at least a colonel, and that's when Col Anderson, Gen Anderson, then was assigned as the program director up there.

And then the other one that was involved was, I guess, the plant representative, the Marine plant representative. I asked Gen Kier, "How did you figure that he was the one that was causing a lot of the problems and stuff?" He said, "It was pretty easy for me to see." He said, "I noticed that every time the working people came down to discuss the problems and try to get them resolved he was never there, but when the high brass was there, he was always right there with the high brass." And, in fact, he accused him, Gen Kier accused

him, in front of Gen Robertshaw and Gen Kyle, Wood Kyle, in a meeting at the AirMFPac headquarters of being a salesman for Litton right in front of him. There was a whole roomful up there, and then he repeated it. Really, those guys did everything in the world to try to get us to say everything was rosy when it was not rosy. They did everything in the world behind our back and what have you, and I was, like I say, I guess I was just too naive. I never believed that a Marine would ever get to a point like that, and they really almost got us out of there and had their way, but Gen Kier wouldn't have it. And then when Gen Greene did come out on that trip, I know he told me at the time, Gen Kier said, "You get in the car with Gen Greene." Gen Greene told me that--he said, "Now, look, I suspect that there are a lot of people prostituting themselves to the contractor." He used the word "prostituting," and he said, "I'm telling you right here and now that I'm even thinking of getting the FBI involved. But if I find out that they're doing that, I'm going to get them out," and he said, "I'm not talking about out of the program. I'm talking about out of the Marine Corps." He was really furious, and evidently Gen Kier had briefed him on what was going on out there, so then as a result of all of that Gen Anderson came back, Col Anderson at that time, to be the program director. He ran the program, and there was no doubt in anybody's mind which way the guidance would go or what we would do in the funding area and the technical areas, the whole thing, and he finally got it lined up. And

I say Gen Kier first that had the insight, was the one, in my view, that really got the thing on the right track and then Gen Anderson really straightened it out and got it to be a successful program and a very successful one.

Frank: Was this guy in fact in the pocket of Litton and he went to work for them after he retired?

Fris: No.

Frank: No. Do you know why?

Fris: One of them told me. The president of that organization told me, he said, "I say that we would never hire him. He prostituted himself to Litton when the Marine Corps was his boss. What makes us think that he wouldn't do that to us if he got a better deal from somebody else?" and they did not hire him.

Batha: I missed the name of the officer.

Frank: He didn't give that officer--

Fris: No, I don't want to name that officer. But there was another technical officer up there too that had been up there all the time. In fact, he went to work for Litton later on, and he did cause us a lot of problems in the area of force

feeding the controller. "You will get this," and, "This was better than what you want anyway," and then, finally, when we would determine through testing that we didn't want that particular function and take it out of the system, he said, "Well, it's going to cost more money to take out than to leave it in, so we're going to leave it in."

Batha: You know, the difference between the way you developed that system and the MCTSSA (Marine Corps Testing Software and Support Activity) now is like night and day, and, yet, I've heard comments that the way you went probably is a quicker way to go to get a piece of gear to the field. Do you have any ideas on that?

Fris: Oh, yes. Well, if I perceive what you're saying, what we did, a group here at Headquarters Marine Corps, wrote up what they said, "This is an operational requirement that we have and we want this system built to do these things," and then they went ahead and built it and developed it, went through the development phase and then the production phase. Now, what MCTSSA does is, they have the computers there and they go through all of these. Rather than just sitting and writing the operational requirements, they go through and test out each one of these functions and say, "We want it to do these specific things and within these particular boundaries," and it's a longer and drawn-out way of doing it, much longer and drawn-out way of doing it. I do feel that, for instance,

in the MIFASS (Marine Corps Integrated Fire and Air Support System) that MCTSSA came out with, I do feel in that particular case that we could have done it much faster and much more efficiently by going the other way rather than going through the MCTSSA thing. The MCTSSA thing has a lot of capability, but I really believe that in the way MCTSSA is set up I believe that they ought to stay out of that particular operational requirement, drawing up the operational requirement. Let the operators do that again, as they did before the establishment of MCTSSA.

Now, the technical people and the programmers, again, for getting involved in this thing, and programmers are great, but they will try anything to be cute, and I don't mean that in a nasty way. They dream up all of these things and like to try them, and it's time consuming, but I say that a guy that has been over there, for instance, in the action can sit down and write, "Look, this is what we want and this is what we want it to do," and then that can be translated by the staffs and what have you into a good operational requirement and then go out to the industry to build this item. Also one thing we did that had Marines involved in this from the start, we had 18 Marines at the plant there with me, going through a training program, the warrant officer right on down to a Pfc, and it really helped a lot. In addition to learning by training, the Marine Corps learns what is being built into that system, and if they're going the wrong way as far as the operational requirements are concerned,

they can bring it to the attention of the right people and get it done, straightened out.

Frank: How about the cooperation with the squadron? Was it an all hands effort, any dragging of the feet or they were really excited about the system?

Fris: Oh, no, they were all out for it. I mean, we had no problem. The only problem we had with the squadron was that--let me back up just a little. I was able, at Headquarters Marine Corps, to go through all of the jackets of people that were eligible and had the qualifications to be put in the program, the technical people and the controllers, so I chose 18 people. Now, five of these did go up at UNIVAC for the computer for that beach relay first, and then they came on down to Litton, but I was able to pick those 18 people. Now, the rest of the squadron was going to be people, in my view, that the Marine Corps would just get from everywhere that had the schooling. I called it mine-run. If we're going to test this equipment, let's have this cadre of highly knowledgeable people that really know what's going on. However we've got to determine whether or not these other people, that are not selected by record books like I had the opportunity to do, send these guys to basic electronics school and then they go to a squadron and they've got to learn the equipment. So I said, well, let's make up a T/O that way. We'll have these 18 guys plus let Headquarters Marine Corps, send the remainder from everywhere.

Well, I ran into a problem there with the Chief of Staff at AirFMFPac because he said, "No, you don't want to do that." He said, "I know, I've been involved in these things before, and if you do that, you're going to get a whole bunch of bums and everything else there and your program's going to fail." And I said, "Well, if the program's going to fail with the regular Marines that we have, we ought not buy the equipment. I mean, that's one of the things we should definitely determine."

So, anyway, we wrote up a T/O, myself and the guys up--the Marines that were up at the plant--we worked up this T/O along with the MACS-3 people that were down there because we had some controllers down there that were going to stay with the unit. We worked up the whole T/O and everything and submitted it, and the Chief of Staff at AirFMFPac said, recommended that all of them be hand picked, the whole squadron. But I, of course, was working with these people back here and they knew my thoughts on it, and they just said, "No way were we going to let him hand pick anyway," so they went along with our recommendation on the thing, and they sent them in from everywhere. Well, we even had, and I'm not kidding, we had one kid that was pulled out of the brig and sent to us. All these people were unloading all of their dirty laundry on us, and I spent an awful lot of time on trying to--through courts and what have you--trying to either get these guys to be good Marines or else get them out. The chief of staff of AirFMFPac was right on on that part of his

prediction. And that's one of the fallacies that we have throughout the Marine Corps, and I know transferring bums still goes on. It went on in MACG-18 when I was out there. I was able to correct it, though, but, anyway, when we got all of that group together, they were really chargers. I mean, they were working day, night, anytime.

We had a warrant offfcer, Dan Mazarotti, in the TACC and the beach relay area. He would go down to the Navy at San Diego--we used their computer area down there to check out our programs--he would find out from them when they weren't using it, and he would go down there and use their computer, and most of the time it was at night. I mean, these guys would work day, night, everything. There was no problem at all. They were really goers, and they are the ones that really made it work. There's no doubt in my mind on that issue. Another warrant officer, Tom Ashe, was one of the smartest young technical officers that we had, and also had the capability of writing a report on something that anybody could read and understand. You didn't have to have a technical background to understand his reports. He just had that technique that was really a valuable one.

Batha: At the time you were out there developing this program, wasn't Gerry Fink out there developing VMCJ-1?

Fris: Gerry Fink was--yes, sir.

Batha: At El Toro too?

Fris: At El Toro, yes.

Batha: Who built that system? Was that Litton too?

Fris: No, no. The thing that they were developing--

Batha: Was a photo--

Fris: I think it's from UNIVAC, I believe.

Frank: No, he told me his problems out there at that time. He had notebooks up to--you know Gerry.

Fris: Oh, yes.

Frank: And he had everybody nailed exactly what they were doing wrong and why and so on. He's--but this must be, to work on a system like this, to develop a system like this, to have the pressures from all sides, must be pretty nerve-wracking. You wonder who your friends are.

Fris: Oh, you really do. And at one time I was told by somebody that I was going to be moved out of there because I wasn't doing it right, so to speak, and I thought at the time if I really get pushed out of here and I know where it's coming

from, I am going to request mast with General Shoup who was the Commandant at the time, and I fully intended to do just that. Then, a little later on, in fact, I was shocked that I got selected for Colonel after all of this was going on. It was a complete shock to me.

Frank: You must have been in the same class with Gerry when he got selected for colonel.

Fris: I think I was a little bit senior.

Frank: You were a little senior? Because he was shocked when he got selected for colonel.

Fris: Well, I was because of that commotion that I got into out there, but, again, I just felt that I was going to be honest all the way through, and I felt--and I used to preach this to the guys all the time--that, "We're not testing this thing to make somebody look good. What we're testing it for is to make a system that guys, Marines, can go into combat and actually do the job that they're supposed to do, and to keep that in your mind, above all. There's all kinds of other political problems and everything else involved, but you in this squadron stick with that philosophy," and that was my goal all the time. Thank God for Gen Kier who saw through the thing, and instigated the changes in the program office, that assigned Gen Anderson to head the office. He told me

that when Gen Anderson--I knew Gen Anderson just by seeing him at Santa Ana. He had the helicopter group there at Santa Ana when I had the test unit, and then he was sent to Vietnam, I guess, on the staff there.

Frank: He was Chief of Staff of III MAF.

Fris: Right. No, not III MAF. No, this was before that. This was in 1964-65. When he went there in the--

Frank: 3d MEB.

Fris: No, no, no. The Army--

Frank: The Joint Task Force?

Fris: The--what was his name that was down there in charge?

Frank: MACV.

Fris: Yes, MACV. He was on the MACV staff.

Frank: On the MACV staff.

Fris: So, then, when he came back from there, I guess it was timed just right. He was coming back from there, and Gen Kier had enlightened Gen Greene on this thing and said

that this was really a dire necessity. But Gen Kier called me and told me. He said, "Now, they've got a man picked for this thing," and he said Col Anderson, which didn't mean anything to me at the time, but then he mentioned that he had the group over there. And I said, "Oh, yes, I remember when he went to Vietnam." And Gen Kier told me, he said, "Now, look, he's a lawyer and he doesn't have a technical background, but I'll tell you that he will know everything that goes on in the thing and he will run that program, and we're not going to have the problems like we've had in the past," and that's just exactly what happened.

Frank: You had to have someone back there at Headquarters running interference for you.

Fris: Exactly, to actually do it.

Batha: I've got two other areas besides the MTDS that I would--they are sort of side areas that I'm looking at. The first one--especially while you were DC/S (Air) probably most of the time you were at Headquarters Marine Corps. I'm kind of trying to keep track of the feeling of the Marine Corps aviation establishment on the Navy's attempts at using our aviation assets, in particular, helicopters, but also the AV-8A for sea control, but the helicopters for mine control countermeasures, ASW, and they have some other things they are talking about now, and I just wonder if that's been a subject of discussion that has gotten to DC/S (Air) levels yet.

Fris: Yes, it always has, but we tried everything we could to cooperate with the Navy, and, as a matter of fact, with the mining of Haiphong Harbor or the demining and clearing the Haiphong Harbor, they needed helicopters because they got rid of all of their minesweepers. They needed the helicopters, and, in fact, they didn't have enough pilots or enough helicopters, so we agreed to let Marines do it because, I mean, this was a national job to be done, and so the Marines will always get right in and go, so we didn't have any problem with that.

Batha: Well, my concern isn't for an operation like that, but, you know, in our traditional amphibious role where they're going to take our assets that we need for our purposes--

Fris: Oh, well--

Batha: In other words, for the ASW, visual ASW searches, or, you know, any of the other type operations that, really, we need to keep a stand-down on our equipment to conserve it for the actual amphibious operations.

Fris: Well, in those areas the Marine Corps does not want to go along with the Navy. We say that, "You program your assets for all of your required functions. We'll program ours for our functions."

Frank: Well, Gen Simmons interviewed Gen Wilson, and this was one of the questions. This was one of the problems. He directed the helicopter squadron commanders aboard Navy carriers that any time their helicopters were being overused or being used as delivery cars by the Navy that he wanted to be directly informed, that there was a great overuse on the part of the Navy of Marine helicopter assets and he wanted to know about it because this was not the way it was going to go, and I think that's what you're talking about.

Batha: I don't--see, from my level, I just came out of the FMF, and the reason I ask the question is, I'm not sure how much attention has been given to this at the Headquarters level. I wanted to get a feel because every operation I went on I saw some sort of encroachment into our operational assets by the Navy, and we always traditionally have the can-do attitude, but the thing is, I just feel it's such a bad habit to get into or to let the Navy even contemplate, and it goes from everything from on-board delivery of equipment to ASW and mine counter-measures. The Navy doesn't have the mining capability in an amphibious assault. SAR missions are not being conducted by the Navy, really, on amphibious operations. We had to program Marine 46's.

Frank: I don't want to cut you off, Frank, but we have some more on MTDS to discuss, and then we can get into that, okay?

Batha: Okay.

Frank: Good question, and I'm sure the answer is pretty obvious or was it coincidental that MTDS was introduced into Vietnam after you took MAG-18?

Fris: No, no, that's not quite right, that isn't. It was introduced in Vietnam I think in July of '67, and I went there in July of '68. Now, I was sent there. In fact, Gen Anderson wanted me to be there for a month, in July 1967, while it was being installed, so I was there for a month while it was being installed to make sure any problems--and, in fact, one of the other problems that I didn't bring up before surfaced right there. We were really concerned about power units to run that thing. Now, when we ran the test we ran it a few times on the power units that the Marine Corps had, but in most cases we had it connected into commercial power, so that really was not an adequate test.

Frank: That was a real great problem in Vietnam as far as avionics went, was it not?

Fris: Oh, yes.

Frank: Testing the power, the diesel engines and motors. You finally had to go commercial instead of buying through the system.

Fris: Well, what we did and, as a matter of fact, when I was out there for that month, we, I guess, had known that the SeaBees had some 60-cycle generators. See, the Marine Corps got 400-cycle generators, and the reason, when you make a 60 to 400 cycle it's much smaller and light weight, but it has to turn a hell of a lot faster, and they just break down. They just don't have the reliability as a 60-cycle generator has, so the idea was that if we could talk the Seabees into giving us some of those 60-cycle generators and then use a converter from 60 to 400 cycles then that would be a good, steady source of power.

So while I was there we held a meeting with the SeaBee people that were there and they said, well, they just didn't have any, on site for our use. They knew exactly where each one of those power units were out there, all up and down Vietnam. But one of the SeaBee officers there did tell me, "Now, I know where some are. They're not out here. They're in the States," and I said, "Can you tell me where they are?" He said he could, and so he told me where they were, and I sent a message back to Gen McCutcheon, who I guess, at that time was DC/S (Air), and told him that the SeaBees had these on the--either on the West Coast or--anyway, one of their depots, and they had so many--

Frank: Port Hueneme?

Fris: Port Hueneme, and they had them there, so evidently, I heard this after I got back, that Gen McCutcheon, then called

an admiral running the SeaBees who was a friend of his and said, "Look, we'd like to get some of these things," and he said,"yes," and in fact they asked--then Gen Krulak to furnish some C-130's to fly them out there which they, in fact, did. They actually flew them out there.

So we had the power generators out there that was a real big help up there, and they had the--the SeaBees had hired Koreans to maintain these things, so the Marines didn't have anything to do with those generators.

Frank: Vietnamese to run them?

Fris: Koreans.

Frank: Oh, Koreans?

Fris: Koreans. They had Koreans. The SeaBees had Koreans trained to maintain those generators, and they would--

Frank: In Vietnam.

Fris: In Vietnam, right, and they did really a good job, and that was one of the problems that we had that was resolved at that time, but, as I was saying, I was there for that one particular month, and then in July, I guess, of '68 was when I went out there, and then they assigned me as CO of MAG-18.

Frank: Were those 60-cycle generators used for other avionics equipment too?

Fris: No, no, no, 400 cycles. We didn't have any 60-cycle generators in the Marine Corps.

Frank: Okay, but--

Fris: You see, the Marine Corps went to the 400-cycle ones, and the hillsides were covered with broken down 400-cycle generators, and I don't know if the Marine Corps has still resolved this problem. I know I was trying to push like mad for--to try to get the 60-cycle generator with converters, and sure, they're heavier, but you got to have something that will last.

Frank: They were bigger and heavier?

Fris: They were bigger and heavier. See, they have to be just by the laws of physics.

Frank: Were they air transportable, helicopter transportable?

Fris: Oh, yes, you could get them by helicopter.

Frank: I was wondering whether that was a consideration as to why the 400s were chosen.

Fris: Well, it was a consideration, but when you talk about the total numbers that would have to be involved, not only the MTDS, but every other power unit, it does make quite a hell of a difference in the total weight and cube of the equipment you're going to take into an operation.

Frank: Well, then--but the problems concerning the power supply did not affect only the MTDS, but also the other--

Fris: Everything.

Frank: --testing all the other avionics.

Fris: Everything.

Frank: What did they do finally for that?

Fris: Well, what they did, for instance, down at the airfield and the avionics down there, they had these big generators. They had huge generators, power plants that were put in there and piped into the hangers so that they could use those, but another thing that we could never do for some reason is train people to maintain those generators, and the control circuitry for those things got, in the avionics area, really, and we were trying to have these mechanics, automobile mechanics, maintain them. They had no idea what was in that control circuitry, and the way we did it, we had MTDS technicians taking care of the ones, you know, prior to that Vietnam thing.

But there was another case where Gen Kier was perceptive. Gen Kier said, "I don't understand why we did what we did." He said, "You can drive all across country or anywhere where there are oil fields and they've got these old generators just running on forever," and he said, "When they're not pumping oil, that means money to those owners, so you know they're reliable, and why the hell don't we get those reliable generators?" Gen Kier said that also.

Frank: Well, what was the answer?

Fris: I don't know what the answer was.

Frank: Procurement at Headquarters?

Fris: Right. And still trying to sell a lot of people that, you've got to change all of these things now, these big buys that you had and everything, and it's an awfully expensive way to go, and then again convincing people that you've got to put up with a lot more weight and cube. It gets pretty tough. Hard to sell.

Frank: How successful was MTDS is Vietnam?

Fris: Oh, it worked like a charm. They had--that group of Marines that were up there had the air picture at their hand at all times. They had all of the information from the Seventh Fleet up there in the Tonkin Gulf.

Frank: You interfaced with the Seventh Fleet?

Fris: It was piped down there 24 hours a day. They could see what was going on in the air picture up there, constantly, and it really worked like a charm. The guys really had control of the aircraft. They knew exactly where they were from takeoff at the field until they came back.

Frank: Now, this--I'm--this is--I'm asking this question from a position of incomplete knowledge. This had nothing to do with black box in a fighter aircraft?

Fris: Well, the black box in the fighter aircraft is the one that would receive the automatic control information that the MTDS sent up, so if it had the black box in there, it could receive this communication. See, it was a digital communication system. So it could receive it, and then if it had the black box for the automatic control of the surfaces of the airplane, why, it would actually control the aircraft.

Frank: Yes, it would control the aircraft and direct it on target.

Fris: Uh huh. But there were very few aircraft that were equipped with that, very few. In fact, when we tested out there on the west coast, we would have troubles scheduling those particular aircraft. They were up at Point Mugu in most cases. They were testing, Point Mugu was testing the stuff for the MTDS and ATDS.

Frank: What lessons were learned in Vietnam in relation to the MTDS which led to the improving of the system?

Fris: Well, there were several. One of them was, I guess, the fact that all of these huts were connected together with cables, and these were big, thick cables, and there were reels and reels. I've forgotten how many pallets of cables that were really large, weight and cube. So the idea there is to make a system now that would eliminate the biggest part of those cables, do it by some other technique, and I understand that the new system that they're building is going to use another technique to do that, to eliminate all of these big, heavy cables. Another one was in the computer itself. That computer was a magnetic drum computer, and the drum worked okay itself. The surface would have some problems, but the bearing is the only thing you really had to keep going. The new computers, the miniature, you can build miniature computers that--and in a lot less space and weight that could have even more capability than this computer did. It was a wired computer, so if you wanted to change a program, you had to rewire the damned thing in different stages. I mean, there were some, like I say, that one 13-wire one that I mentioned earlier, but there were a lot of them. There were hundreds of wires that had to be changed. They're sort of getting away from that part of it.

Another one was in the mapping feature. There was one hut that was the photo hut, and in it you had to process the

photos, the maps, and what have you, and then put this processed photo into a lens that would pick up the information and display it on the scope. I mean, there are all kinds of techniques to do that that are much simpler now. It was mostly things like that that--

Frank: Well, now, I'm going back in mind, and, again, I may be wrong. The DASC modules were air transportable, right, they had-what kind of structure do they call them?

Fris: I don't know. The DASC hardly had anything. I mean, they just had desks.

Frank: What kind of air control system am I thinking about that was built in one of these--

Fris: Well, you're thinking that--TPQ-10 which was the automatic air bombing system.

Frank: Yes. That was an air transportable thing.

Fris: That was air transportable. In fact, one of the things broke over water in Vietnam and we lost one, one hut went under, but that--

Frank: The MTDS, there was nothing air transportable about that, the system or the modules?

Fris: Well, they were all helicopter transportable. All of the MTDS was helicopter transportable.

Frank: I see, okay.

Fris: All of it was.

Frank: Did it pick up the hut and everything?

Fris: Oh, yes, just pick up the hut intact and away it would go.

Frank: I see. It was a module-type thing?

Fris: Yes, uh huh.

Frank: Okay.

Fris: Yes, there were about a dozen huts to pick up.

Frank: Of course, problems not only of keeping the avionics or the electronics aspect, but the air conditioning and the communications.

Fris: Oh, yes, and that was another big drain on the power source, was that air conditioning stuff, and you have to have--well, in this particular thing, you had to have air conditioning in there just for the equipment.

Frank: Yes.

Fris: To keep it from burning up, and, of course, the controllers couldn't have operated in there without the air conditioning either, and it was a real big drain on the power supply.

Batha: Yes. Tactically, when you set up your MTDS, did you have your antennas located on site or were they--

Fris: They were on site.

Batha: They were on site.

Fris: They were on site.

Batha: So, did we learn our lesson from that or do you know if they offset them now?

Fris: Well, I don't think that we're going to be able to sit anywhere and say they're going to offset them or not. If you give them the capability to offset them and they have to go out here to cover an area that's blanked to the system, they will go ahead and do it. But I still believe that, human nature being what it is, if they don't have to offset them, they're going to be as close there as they possibly can in order to maintain supply, support, getting people back and forth.

Now, it's not good from the viewpoint of the armed missiles and stuff like that, anti-radiation missiles, but, human nature being what it is, they're going to have to drive people, I think, away from it. Of course, in Vietnam they didn't have that problem because we didn't have any air strikes over there against the--

Batha: Talking to an NFO just last week and his concept of fighter tactics, my question is, just in a general sense, how do you envision the MTDS handling both the use of Hawks as well as fighters simultaneously? Do we set up corridors or do we actually let the fighters go out front and hit them from behind or--

Fris: Well, the fighters can go out there, but there is an area within which the missiles are going to be fired which is a danger area, and what you do, there's a code there that you can give out to this guy that's a fighter. For instance, if he's chased them in or something and comes into that area where missiles are going to be fired, why, he's given this codeword to shove off, that missiles are coming up there. And, by the way, the missiles can be fired right--not fired from, but directed right from that MTDS scope. That controller has that capability also which is a--

Batha: So they don't really need the batteries set up? They could actually just have the missiles out there and an MTDS could--

Fris: Oh, no, no, no. They need a battery set up. I'm saying that he's doing the controlling, and he says that he wants these missiles fired at--in fact, we ran a missile shoot out there, a live missile shoot, and the controller was a missile man, and he came up into the MTDS system and he ran that whole shoot from there. He was up on Monkey Mountain; the missile battery gear or battalion gear, actually, was down on Danang Airfield, and up on Hai Van Pass.

Frank: Hai Van Pass, yes.

Fris: --is where the shoot was actually taking part, and the guy up on Monkey Mountain was doing the whole thing. He ran the whole shoot, a very successful one, by the way, right from there.

Frank: So it was pretty accurate, then?

Fris: Yes. The thing that it does, again, like I say, is that it gets all of the stuff there together and any interaction that would be detrimental to air defense can be handled by this guy. It's presented to him there and he can go ahead and choose which way to go. Now, by the way, that was another area where they had put into the R&D system an automatic threat evaluation system, and what this did was--said the system would take all of these targets that were coming in and say which threat was the most dangerous and which one

had first priority and what have you. Well, the controllers didn't like that at all. They said, "Look, I can determine right away by looking which one is the most dangerous threat, so I don't need that at all. In fact, I would override it in most cases," and they recommended that it be taken out.

Well, now, the new system that they're building, they're putting that damned thing in again, and I still say that it's a big mistake because any controller that's worth his salt knows what he's doing, and he can see those things, and he can determine which ones should be fired first, and I know there was no doubt in any of them there what was going on.

Frank: The--what, if any, special equipment was required on individual aircraft to make it compatible with the system?

Fris: Well, that was these black boxes and receivers to receive the data link that went from the ground.

Frank: As Frank said, he spoke to someone several weeks ago when he first told them that he was going to be involved in the interview, it's now interfacing with NATO as well as with the Air Force and the Navy.

Fris: Yes. And a lot of that work was done, very valuable work done right there at MCTSSA for the--

Frank: Well, you brought in MCTSSA--that's MCTSSA which stands for the Marine Corps Tactical what?

Fris: Tactical Systems Support Activity.

Frank: Okay.

Fris: Tactical Systems Support Activity.

Frank: And that does what?

Fris: Well, that's another long story, I guess. What it really does, supposedly, is test a lot of these concepts before the Marine Corps would actually go out and buy the actual hardware, and then, after the hardware is bought, they would test the equipment to see whether or not it worked properly plus the fact that after the stuff was in the field, and the field units say, "Look, we'd like this change put in," or what have you, they would test out this change before they'd go to industry and say, "Yeah, we want that thing put in there." They now, with the computers they have, they can write the computer programs there and sent them out to the unit and say, "Put these in your computer."

Like I say, it's a valuable asset from that viewpoint. I think the mistake, in my view, the mistake was made on asking them to write operational requirements. I just don't think that that's the way to do it. Now, a lot of the university people and what have you like that way of doing things. I, for one, am against it because I still think that a guy that's been out there knows what it takes to fight that war

or fight his particular part of the war. He knows exactly what he wants, and you ought to do it the way he wants it.

Frank: Uh huh.

Fris: And he's capable of sitting down and writing an operational requirement that does exactly what he wants.

Frank: What, if any, effect did single management issue have on the MTDS?

Fris: Well, the one big one that I mentioned earlier was the Air Force not even wanting us. See, they were trying to kill our program all along because they want control of all air everywhere. In fact, I made two trips, I guess, out to Vietnam to discuss with the Air Force the installation of our system in that Monkey Mountain, and, in fact, I went out the first time with a team of guys that were going to be in MACS-4, go out there earlier to find the site to put it on. We wanted to put it up there on Monkey Mountain because there was a Hawk missile unit up there on that site and it's two miles away from the Air Force unit. Well, that kind of rankled the Air Force right away, and we had a rough time arguing with them to even get permission to put the MTDS up there. They didn't even want it up there at all.

Frank: Where did they want it?

Fris: In the United States.

Frank: They didn't want it out in Vietnam.

Fris: They didn't want it in Vietnam at all, no way did they want it out there.

Frank: And their system wasn't working.

Fris: The guys who were out there, there was a--and I'd better not mention his name either, but he wanted the MTDS badly. He was in charge of that Monkey Mountain site, and he worked with us all the time and did all kinds of things that gave him information that he needed, and we cooperated fully with him all the way, and he cooperated with us. As a matter of fact, at one of the meetings that I attended out there early on they said, "No, you can't put that up there because it's going to interfere--your big radar is going to interfere with our system here on Monkey Mountain." We kept saying no, we didn't think that it would interfere and if it did interfere, we'd shut down. Well, I'd been around this stuff long enough to know that any time you are testing a radar or turning a radar on, if you announce to people that had electronic gear and said, look, we're going to turn it on at 2:00 o'clock this afternoon. At 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon the phone starts ringing and everybody's got interference against their system from this radar. So, as I say, I learned long

ago that what you do is don't tell them that it's on. If you get a call, why, then, shut it off immediately, but don't tell them that it's on and you probably won't get a gripe.

So I talked to this gent that was in charge up there, and I said, "Look, we're going to turn that thing on now this afternoon," and this was for that month that I was out there in '67, and I said, "We're going to turn it on this afternoon. How about if myself and my radar officer come over to your site and you and I get at one of your scopes and we can talk to these guys over at our site and we'll tell them when to turn it on and turn it off, and we can observe from behind and see all of your scope operators," because they had a big room with all the scopes in it, "and we'll see whether or not it interferes." So he says, "That's fine with me." And we did just exactly that, and then nobody complained. We turned it on and turned it off, back there, and there was no interference whatsoever, and then we just left it on and the thing went away, as far as any complaints against that radar was concerned.

They wanted, in the single management area, they, of course, wanted to control the Navy's stuff up there, and that's why they wanted the Navy information in there from MTDS, and they worked real hard with us on trying to get that information over to their place.

As I say, the MTDS itself gives you the capability to control, and I think that the single management issue is up

there higher up where the people are saying, "Look, I, as a wing commander, am going to control these assets. You, as your Air Force commander, can control those." Now, we control ours through the Marine MTDS, the . . . and the other guy will control theirs through his system, but then these two guys have to work together and which we were able to work together out there with the...

End Tape 1, Side 2

Session I - 22 September, 1980

Begin Tape 2, Side 1

Frank: You were saying the other people weren't worried about--

Fris: The higher up people, for instance, at--MACV, they were always working on the single management thing, that they had to have control of these assets and what have you, and I know that the wing was always arguing with them. MTDS does give you the facility with which to control the air assets, but, as I said earlier, I think that the people higher up are the ones that are arguing the single management issue. MTDS was sort of a thorn in their side with respect to their position on single management. That's why we did argue out there in getting the sites set up and we had a hell of a time convincing them. We never did convince them, I'm sure, but we did get to site MTDS where we wanted to.

Frank: Well, I think this might be a good place to stop. We may think of some other questions. And next time we make an appointment we'll start doing your career as a whole. Okay? All right, thank you.

Fris: And then we'll get back to some of your questions.

Frank: Right.

End Session I

Session II - 29 September 1980

Frank: Okay. This is a continuation of the second tape of the first session and side 1 of that tape, and this is Session II with Gen Fris, and the date of this interview is 29 September 1980. It's in the Marine Corps Historical Center and I am being assisted, associated on this interview, with--by Major Frank Batha. I guess we'll start at the beginning now, General, at the beginning of your career, and let's go back a little earlier to your family life. You're a native of Illinois?

Fris: Illinois, southern Illinois.

Frank: Southern Illinois. And you went to school where?

Fris: College?

Frank: Yes.

FRIS 2

Fris: Missouri School of Mines in Rolla, Missouri.

Frank: Oh. Well, that's right. You have an engineering background.

Fris: Which now is called the University of Missouri at Rolla, but at that time I guess it was the Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy.

Frank: And you majored in what?

Fris: Electrical engineering.

Frank: Electrical engineering, so it wasn't primarily a mining school.

Fris: No, it was all types of engineering.

Frank: And you came in the Marine Corps at the end of '43?

Fris: I was in an ROTC unit at the school, an Army ROTC unit, and then when the--I guess right before we were supposed to graduate the head of the unit came in and said that they were permitted to give one commission to the Marine Corps if anybody wanted to go to the Marine Corps, so I jumped at it right away. I think there were two or three officers that came to the school at one time and gave a pitch for the Marine Corps, and it really sold me, so when this came up, why, I said I'd like to go to it. There were, I guess, two others that said they would like to and then the two others dropped out and then some others came in and, anyway, by the time the group met there were three people I guess at the school, the registrar, the head of the ROTC unit, and the football coach, I guess, chose me to go, so I went to the Marine Corps and I guess the rest of them went to Army Engineers.

Frank: Army Engineers. Of course, the war had been on for a couple of years now when you came?

Fris: Oh, yes.

Frank: Had they started any ASTP unit on a campus yet, that Army Specialized Training Program? Remember the college boys--it was the Army's answer to the V-5 and V-12 programs.

Fris: No, they didn't.

Frank: Okay. So you had finished up--you hadn't graduated, had you, or had you when you came in the Marine Corps?

Fris: Oh, yes, I graduated. What we did, the people that were in the ROTC unit had to go to summer school in the summer of '42. We were class of '43 which would normally have graduated in May of '43, but we graduated in January of '43 because of going to summer school, and we had no choice. They were--we were told to go to summer school which we were all happy to do to get out earlier anyway. We were ready to go.

Frank: Okay. When you went to Quantico you went to the 24th ROC.

Fris: Right.

Frank: Who else of any prominence in the Marine Corps was a member of that class?

Fris: Gosh, I have no--I really don't know of any that did from that particular class.

Frank: You, of course, are the most senior from that class?

Fris: Yes. There were a couple of colonels, I know, but I--I'm trying to think of one of their names, was--and the last time I saw him, he was down at the Navy base at Charleston, South Carolina. He had the Marine barracks down there, and then later on, I guess, Col Jim Tuma, I met at Harvard, at MIT, though, I met him there. He was in a class ahead of me, I guess.

Frank: Jim Tuma was. He was the one who later became quite a physical fitness nut, recon type, and--

Fris: Right, but he went to radar school up at Harvard and MIT with me and we were sort of lab partners and stuff like this.

Frank: Uh huh. Okay. So the ROC--now, to recap the process by which the--there was an OCC and ROC at that time, am I right?

Fris: Right.

Frank: Were you commissioned right after graduation?

Fris: Right. They sent me home and said await orders from the Marine Corps. Then I went home and waited there and then orders first came in to me there, my commission came in, my orders to report to Quantico.

Frank: Who swore you in?

Fris: Gosh, I don't remember. I think it was the--where I went to Louisville, Kentucky, for a physical. I had to go there for a physical, and I think the officer there, so I have no idea who it was.

Frank: At that time I think there were some people who were commissioned and had to go through ROC and others went through the OCCs and then were commissioned and went into the ROC.

Fris: Right. In fact, the major portion of that class, the 24th ROC all went through that OCC, and there were, oh, I don't know, maybe a dozen of us that came from different universities through the ROTC program who came in there.

Frank: What was the ROC like at this time, two years into the war?

Fris: It was basically like Basic School. I was really impressed. The training that I had with the Army and down at

Fort Leonard Wood--we'd go down there and we'd have some other field exercises and stuff and it just didn't compare at all. I was thoroughly impressed when I arrived at Quantico to go to school.

Frank: Had you known anything about the Marine Corps before?

Fris: No. Only what I saw in the movies.

Frank: Sure.

Fris: But then these--I think there were three officers that came. They were in the recruiting business and they'd go to each of the colleges, I guess, at that time trying to recruit people into the Marine Corps. I was so impressed with those three gents that, boy, if I could get in the Marine Corps, that's really the way I'd go. And at that time, of course, there was no way that you could get out of the ROTC. I was headed for the Army as far as I was concerned, and then about a month before we graduated all of this came up about they would permit one man to go to the Marine Corps.

Frank: Now, when you graduated from the ROC, we didn't have an MOS system at that time. We had the SSNs and so on. What were you classified as?

Fris: I guess I was classified in the communications area

because while I was in the ROC, I got called in and I'll never forget his name, Col Beckett, of course, he had a son later on--

Frank: Named Johnny Beckett?

Fris: Johnny. His dad, John W. Beckett, I believe.

Frank: Right, yes.

Fris: And his dad had the ROC at the time, and I got called into his office, and, of course, the first thing I was worried about, what did I do wrong to get called in there, and what it was, in fact, I guess the platoon commander told me, don't worry about it, it's talking about your next assignment. So when I went in there he said that they had a particular requirement for people with my educational background, and, of course, they weren't even talking radar and you couldn't even speak the word radar or anything else at that time. He told me that he wanted to send me to that school, and he said, "Would you like to go?" And I said, "No, I really wouldn't. I just got out of college. I wanted to come into the Marine Corps. I'd rather go to combat engineers, and I do have that background, from the Army," and he says, "Well, I really think that it's better for you, though, to go to this other one. I can't talk you into volunteering?" And I said, "No, I'd rather go to the combat engineers." He says,

"Well, I don't have any choice, really, because we're really looking for people with your qualifications and we don't have that many." For instance, Jim Tuma was sent and he was a football coach. He was in that business all the time. There was another guy that was a radio announcer, and I think he said--and I don't know if he was telling it as a joke--but he said that he put RAD, you know, on his background when he came in the Marine Corps. He was a radio announcer and they sent him to this school. He didn't make it. Jim Tuma bulldozed his way through the thing, but this other guy didn't make it.

But, anyway, at that time they were looking for these people. It was a very secretive thing, and I guess, then, that I was assigned an SSN in the communications field because the school wasn't going to start until September, I think it was, so they sent us down to Camp Lejeune with a communications outfit.

Frank: Signal Battalion Training Center.

Fris: So we just went there and sort of passed time, did odd things and what have you until this school started.

Frank: Well, they sent you up to radio engineering school at Harvard.

Fris: The school was a combined school. You went to Harvard first for the engineering, the radio engineering. This was for

people, again, who had no background whatsoever. In fact, the reason I caught up with Jim Tuma, they skipped me a month because I was taking all these tests and everything, and I guess they noticed that I was finishing them before everybody else, not because I was that smart, but because I had that background, that stuff. So then one of the professors called me in and said, "Look, I think it's really a waste of time. We've watched you here and we've looked at your background, and it's really a waste of time, so we think that we'll skip this last month and move you on to MIT," so then I went to MIT where I caught up with Jim Tuma.

Frank: And that was about a four-month course altogether?

Fris: Right, uh huh. Engineering course. It was a pretty complicated one, very well conducted, and they had a lot of Navy professors, really, in that specialty, and they were people that, I guess, had a lot of that background and came into the Navy and then were commissioned and sent right there to school. As a matter of fact, one of the guys that I went to college with--I was behind him two years--but I knew him and I knew he went to the Navy, and he ended up there teaching the course.

Frank: Were there any enlisted or was this strictly for officers?

Fris: No, this was strictly for officers. And, as a matter of fact, they had in the building down at the--I've forgotten

which part of Boston it was--but even that was secret. You didn't know where--when we were leaving there we didn't know where to go even to check in. You had to go to MIT to the administration building and then they told you to go to this building because that was kept secretive also, and, for instance, the magnatron which is the transmitter tube in radar, we couldn't even use that term. It had to be called the Gertrude. Gertrude was the code word for magnetron at that time, so it was just the beginning of radar.

Frank: From there you went in January or I guess you had proceed time because in April you wound up as a radar officer with the Air Warning Squadron 9.

Fris: Well, where I went from there, though, in January was down to the Army Southern Signal Corps School in Camp Murphy, Florida, and I went there for a special type radar. They sent us from there--the Marine Corps wanted to get people that were going to these air warning squadrons that had a special training in a particular type radar. There were three types of radars at the time in the air warning squadrons, so I went there for that training.

Frank: You were sick for a couple of months, though.

Fris: Yes, I was sick then. I got hepatitis, I guess, while I was there.

Frank: Oh, really. Let's see, detached--

Fris: The only time I've ever been in a hospital.

Frank: Yes, Camp Murphy, that's right, in February you were sick at the hospital. Okay. And, of course, the 9th Wing and Air Warning Squadron 9 were strictly training--

Fris: No, they were forming up to go overseas.

Frank: Yes, but the 9th Wing was a training wing. It never went--never left Cherry Point.

Fris: Yes, to my knowledge it never did.

Frank: Yes, the Marine Air--well, part of Marine Air Warning Group 2. Well, you were at AWS-9 which was part of the 9th Wing which then was attached to Marine Air Warning Group 2 which later went to AirFMFPac, and you joined--

Fris: Yes. We went from there to Miramar, California.

Frank: Right.

Fris: And we were supposed to move on overseas, but I don't know what happened at that time, and we stayed right there, then, and just operated there at Miramar, and then I guess

even at the last, I think about in January of '45, I think we went down to a--I can't think of the name of the place--in East San Diego--

Frank: Camp Gillespie.

Fris: Camp Gillespie, right. It was a paratroop base and Marine Corps Auxiliary Air Facility.

Frank: Right.

Fris: Yes. We went there and operated from that base then, and then we went overseas.

Frank: So you were out at Camp Gillespie. What kind of training were you--was there much of a transition in the types of equipment?

Fris: No, we had the same equipment that I trained in down at the Army Signal Corps School, and had the exact equipment. Then while we were at Camp Gillespie a new equipment to replace that one came out, and we got that one, and, in fact, tested it on the west coast.

Frank: Do you remember what its nomenclature was?

Fris: Yes, the TPS-1B. The first one that it replaced was the SCR602, I guess. It was Signal Corps radar is what it was called,

SCR-602, and then it went to the TPS-1B, and we're just now getting rid of the last versions of the TPS.

Frank: Really?

Fris: I think the 1D, I think, is the last one that we--

Frank: Was it that good? Was the basic concept--

Fris: Oh, yes. No, it was a good little radar, and the thing was, it was portable. It was all in boxes; you could break it down and carry it. The others were big radars. The SCR270 was a huge one on a big tower, and then the other one was a controller's radar, and that was the SCR527 that they used for the controller.

Frank: I remember Gen Berkeley, who was an old communications officer, Phil Berkeley, tell how before the war when he was on maneuvers down at Culebra, Viegues. I guess it was Culebra at that time that they saw the first radar aboard capital ships. They looked like bedsprings and, of course, highly classified and only a few people involved in it, so, of course, it changed quite a bit. You, of course, did not get overseas until February of '46, I believe it was--

Fris: '45.

Frank: '45.

Fris: We were headed for Okinawa.

Frank: That's right.

Fris: We were loaded and headed for Okinawa and something again altered that and we went into Hawaii, and then we unloaded at Hawaii and then we had to set up there. We were out at Ewa, I guess, on the beach. Set up out there and then, finally, we were supposed to load up and go to Okinawa again, and in the meantime the war was over while we were there in Hawaii, and then they still loaded us aboard ship to go on out there, and I don't really know what our mission was supposed to be. We weren't let in on it at all, and by the time we got there they had changed that, and so we went on into Japan then.

Frank: And you were only in Yokosuka about a month or so.

Fris: And then we loaded--well, in fact, we remained loaded. We hardly unloaded anything, remained loaded and then came on back to the West Coast and came into El Toro.

Frank: On an LST across the Pacific.

Fris: I think it was 86 days or 83 days or something on that

LST, and I'm telling you that was a miserable thing. We got to know each other pretty well.

Frank: Pardon?

Fris: We got to know each other pretty well.

Frank: Yes. What were the quarters like? I've been aboard LSTs.

Fris: Just a bunk, that's it. It wasn't bad. It wasn't bad at all.

Frank: No officer's country or anything per se?

Fris: Well, there was officer's country, yes. They had their own mess and everything, and we spent most of the time in that and then we would spend time--we got to know the ship's officers so well, I guess. We'd be up with them on watch, even offered to stand watch for them, but, of course, that was illegal.

Frank: The top deck that was loaded completely--

Fris: Oh, yes, the whole thing, the tank deck, and we were in some pretty bad weather, and the equipment that was down below, we had an awful lot of vehicles, of course, with this equipment, and had some rough times with that.

Frank: Was the whole squadron loaded aboard one LST?

Fris: No, two LSTs.

Frank: Two LSTs. So you had--what was the strength of an AWS at that time, do you recall?

Fris: I really don't recall. I'd say it's at least 200, but I really--

Frank: Two hundred in the squadron, considerable motor transport--

Fris: That's just a guess.

Frank: Yes, okay. Okay, so you came back and arrived at Miramar in December, and you went to Air Warning Squadron 13 at Marine Air, West Coast.

Fris: We went to El Toro and we disbanded from there.

Frank: Uh huh. Now, had you put in for flight training before this?

Fris: No, while we were there there was a message came in and said that they had invited all aircraft engineering, and radar officers to put in for flight training. Of course, I wanted to anyway.

Frank: Oh, had you wanted--

Fris: Yes.

Frank: When did you get the bug for flying?

Fris: I don't know, somewhere along the line, I guess in the associations probably down at Cherry Point when I first arrived there from that radar school and went to AWS-9 and we were out at Oak Grove, I guess, in an outlying field, and I guess I sort of got the bug there.

Frank: Uh huh. Were you married at the time?

Fris: I was not married at the time.

Frank: So you didn't have to check in with anybody?

Fris: No.

Frank: Okay. Was the pace of air training at this time, at the end of the war, kind of leisurely. It wasn't as frantic?

Fris: Well, it wasn't as frantic, but they kept you going, but I'm sure--of course, I don't know what it was before then, but I would say it couldn't have been--

Frank: You were what, a captain by now, or a first lieutenant?

Fris: I was a first lieutenant, I guess, yes, a first lieutenant.

Frank: I see. Okay. And you went down to Corpus Christi instead of Pensacola?

Fris: Right, and in fact, Les Brown and Jay Hubbard were in a class behind me.

Frank: Oh, they were in the same class?

Fris: Behind me. They were a class behind me.

Frank: I see. And, of course, Les Brown had been in infantry, had been an enlisted Marine--

Fris: Right.

Frank: --and an infantry officer, I think.

Fris: And I guess Jay Hubbard was too.

Frank: And Jay Hubbard was too.

Fris: Yes.

Frank: Yes. Okay. So this was a period of what, about 18 months?

Fris: About that I think, it seems to me.

Frank: They say--CV-type training. Did you go into carrier type training immediately?

Fris: Well, what you did, see, in Corpus Christi you went through the basic flying and what have you, and then from there you went to Pensacola, and at Pensacola you got the instrument training and also carrier training in an SNJ. We actually landed aboard a carrier there, and then from there we went to what they called operational training, and that was at Cecil Field in Florida, and that's when we got into Corsairs when you went there, and then also landed aboard carriers there in Corsairs.

Frank: You were only at Pensacola for about, let's see, March, April, May, June, so about three and a half months you got your wings there and from there you went to--

Fris: Went to the operational training in Corsairs.

Frank: What was it like flying a Corsair?

Fris: Well, in comparison to that SNJ, the SNJ you sort of sat up there, and here was the engine right in front of you

and the propeller, but when you got in that Corsair, you looked like you were behind a freight train because the fuel cell was between you and the engine, and the engine was up there and then the propeller and it was quite a thrill, but it was a great airplane. I mean, the first time you got in it you really wondered, but it was really a great airplane. We really enjoyed it.

Frank: Did you go--of course, there were no two-seater Corsairs--

Fris: Oh, no, no.

Frank: --so you went into it the first time you went up--

Fris: Right, went up by myself.

Frank: --you went up and soloed by yourself. We had a duty aviator who was one of our historians here, Harvey Bradshaw, whom you may know.

Fris: Oh, I know Harvey.

Frank: Yes, and we were talking to Harvey when I was writing about World War II, and he said the Corsair was called the bent-wing widow-maker, and talking about some of the qualities because of the fact that the engine had high torque, that the Corsair pilots were called left legged.

Fris: It really had a bad reputation there for a while, and, as a matter of fact, the Navy gave them all to the Marine Corps because they were having so many problems with them on the carrier.

Frank: The oleo strut would break on landing, and 'til that was--

Fris: And they also had that wing problem, that--

Frank: Yes, the torque--

Fris: And so they gave them all to the Marine Corps and then they kept working on the thing, and finally got it fixed, and it was a wonderful carrier airplane. I remember one time we were on an operation--this was in, I guess, about in '48 or '49, we were on an operation called--it was a Mikiey operation out in Hawaii, and we were supporting an Army outfit, I guess, but there were two carriers there, and the Marines were on one carrier and the Navy was on the other one, and I guess at that particular time they were also being judged as whether or not they were going to win the efficiency trophy. And so the captain of this carrier that we had had only Marines on there, didn't have any Navy, and he was competing with the Navy people, and they had all kinds of things set up to where you'd have to be--the deck crew would have to load the bombs and what have you and get you off in a certain length of time, and then come back and get you aboard in a

certain length of time and what have you, and I guess we outdid the Navy on that thing, and he was absolutely thrilled. We had Corsairs and they had the F6's at the time that they were doing aboard, F6's and TPM's, TBM's.

Frank: And another problem I understand they had with the Corsairs was that toward the end of the war when they started putting the Corsairs on the carriers they were using the Bennington class, when the Marine squadrons went aboard, Bennington class, and I forget what the width of the flight deck was and it was very, very critical because--for the pilot, especially, being up so high and not really being able to judge his wings, his--the perspective was bad.

Fris: Well, the problem there was, again, was because you're sitting behind this thing and when you got in the landing attitude that nose and engine and stuff were all in your way. You couldn't see straight ahead, so when you came around to make that approach, you had to make sure that you could see off the tip of that nose and see the LSO and the carrier because when you rolled out, you never saw a thing ahead of you. There was just no way that you could see anything ahead of you.

Frank: And you just let her drop down gently?

Fris: That's all. You landed it and hoped you caught a wire, and, of course, in those days they also had the barrier rather

than the canted decks. They would put a barrier up. It was just a couple strands of cable that they pulled across there, and if you didn't catch a wire you went into that barrier, and that was to protect the airplanes that were parked up ahead.

Frank: Yes. Well, there were tremendous problems toward the end of the war when we did put carrier--Marine squadrons aboard carriers, and I recall I was appalled at the number of operational accidents before the carriers went into the Pacific, just the training with the Corsairs on the carrier, a large, large number. Okay, you were at Cecil and at Jacksonville 'til November of '47, I guess.

Fris: Right, and Jacksonville was just the administrative center Cecil was the outlying field.

Frank: Was it a pretty stringent course of training?

Fris: I thought it was and I thought most others did. They were--

Frank: Flying every day?

Fris: Practically every day except when the weather--I recall at one time, though, well early on they actually had people in pools because I guess they didn't have enough instructors to carry everybody through, and then when we went to operational

training--I've forgotten how many were there. I don't know if you ever met Pat Young. Do you know Pat Young?

Frank: Pat Young.

Fris: He's up in New York. He was in the protocol office of the city, I believe.

Frank: Yes.

Fris: And Pat Young was one of the guys that was in the class. Well, when we got there evidently the Marine Corps had an overage of pilots because they came out and said that they had to drop--and I've forgotten how many dropped, but there were at least five or six, I guess, that were dropped out of the class. Now, they already had their wings, but they were asked whether or not they wanted to drop and--

Frank: Out of aviation, period?

Fris: Out of flying. No, not out of aviation, but they had to get out of flying because evidently the Marine Corps had too many. I don't know, but that was the--

Frank: Well, I think about that time there was a problem.

Fris: Yes.

Frank: Because about this time they cut off the training of Marine aviators until I think Korea, if you recall.

Fris: Right. I don't know that they cut it off completely, but anyway, they did drop a lot of people right at that time.

Frank: And there were a lot of--(Telephone rings). You were saying--well, we were talking about the attrition of pilots. There were--

Fris: There were several of them that got--

Frank: Well, there were quite a few, as a matter of fact, that lost their flight orders, kept their wings, of course, but--

Fris: Oh, yes, they kept their wings.

Frank: --but a number of them were--had been flyers during the war. I remember our artillery officer in the 5th Marines, artillery liaison, had been an aviator, and as a matter of fact, had been Gen Holcomb's pilot when he was Ambassador to South Africa. I forget what his name is. And he later--knew him quite well--was later the OSO in St. Louis which was where he came from, but there were a whole group of--a lot of people who came into aviation late. I'm sure it was quite a--it just wasn't a random selection of aviators out. They were given

their chance either to get out of the Marine Corps or to get into another field.

Fris: Well, we were also told there at Cecil Field that it was--the guys that weren't doing too good or were at the bottom of the thing--well, like I say, that's just hearsay. I don't know that that's the way they determined who was to go out or what, but, well, Charlie Dobson. You know the guy that was killed in that plane crash? His wife wrote that book? From Quantico, when they took the instruction team out and they ran into a mountain?

Frank: Oh, yes, sure, right.

Fris: Charlie Dobson was on it. He was a class ahead of me there in flight training. He was a ground officer too before he went--

Okay. Rufus Sams went through flight training down there when I was there.

Frank: Yes, right.

Fris: Well, Rufus Sams was one, and the other one was Carlson, Evan C. Carlson, Junior.

Frank: Junior, right.

Fris: And Carlson, I know, he spun in down at Pensacola, coming in to land on the carrier in an SNJ and spun in and luckily survived it, and, of course, he had a Board, and everybody said, "Well, there's no doubt about it. They'll continue him," and they did. And he used to have--

Frank: I think Sam was just a good old boy from Alabama.

Fris: Oh, yes, but he was--I never flew with him. It's just again hearsay of other aviators who flew with him and said that he was a little bit rough . . .

Frank: Okay. You first were assigned...you made captain down there, and assigned to the 1st Wing out of El Toro, VMF-312.

Fris: Right. I made captain while I was there and was a pilot in that squadron, and at that time they had a policy that when you came out of flight training you were assigned to a squadron and would stay there for two years which, of course, tickled the heck out of all of us that were in that category, so I stayed in the squadron for two years.

Frank: Yes. Now, I imagine--now, what is the transition, going from training, operational training, and joining a squadron? It's a whole new learning lesson, isn't it?

Fris: Well, somewhat. I mean, you're learning a lot more tactics from different people. When you were in the training command, why, you had one instructor that ran you through these things, and it was a Marine instructor, Jack Perry, who later was a prisoner of war in Korea. Jack Perry was our instructor there at Jacksonville, and a darned good one. And so then when you went to a squadron, why, you went with their particular SOP's and what have you on how they would operate. And I know one of the problems that all of us were having, those that got into this squadron 312, there was a CO there--I guess it was an SPD pilot--and he always wanted to fly the whole squadron at one time, and it seemed to me that every squadron there wanted to be able to get all the airplanes in the air at one time and fly over the station to show that they had them all in operational condition. Well, the thing was that the way he wanted you to fly formation, he wanted you to sort of step up which I guess they did in the SPD's, and he wanted you to do that in the Corsair, and we were just never trained to fly that way at all.

Frank: What do you mean step up? What is that?

Fris: Well, on the leader. See, normally, you sit down here so you can look up and watch him--

Frank: Right.

Fris: --and you just fly right with him, but what he wanted to do was get you up here so you're looking down on them. Evidently they flew that way in SPD's, I don't know, but that's what some of the experienced pilots were telling me at that--

Frank: Was it a matter of vision from the cockpit canopy, you think?

Fris: Yes, right,.

Frank: Uh huh.

Fris: So--and, especially, for instance, if he turned into you, you know, you're up here. There's no way you can see him. When you're down here he can turn into you or the other way around or what have you, and this guy kept wanting to do that, and we were--there were--I guess there were about four of us that joined that squadron, and we were all having trouble with that particular thing, and this was just one man. I mean, nobody else did it that way. He just wanted it done that way. But, other than that, it was a learning process, and, of course, dropping live ordnance which you didn't do in the training command; you dropped practice bombs, but you did, you know, do that.

Frank: Is there much difficulty, for instance, in transitioning from a plane like an SPD to a Corsair or Corsair to something--

Fris: Oh, it's quite a difference. Like I say, the first thing is the visibility thing. The other is all that power that you have out there, you know, that--

Frank: Of course, the Corsair was a much more powerful plane than a Dauntless, yes.

Fris: Oh, yes, and you knew it, too, as soon as you poured the coal to it--boy, it really--

Frank: All right. Well, say, in going from Corsair, the next step up would have been transitioning to jets, I guess.

Fris: Oh, yes. No, that wasn't--the only thing there, again, in fact, it's easier to fly a jet, I think, than it is--

Frank: That's what I heard, that jets are an easier plane to fly than--

Fris: Yes, because once you get it started all you've got is that one thing to go, but you've got, you know, the propeller pitch, the supercharger, all of that stuff that you have in a propeller-driven airplane.

Frank: Would you call flying a Corsair a fun plane to fly?

Fris: Oh, yes, yes, great airplane, great airplane. It was always a pleasure flying that one.

Frank: You know, the old aviators, harkening back to the time when they flew the Curtis Hawks or the DH's and the Jenny's, I guess, and some of these planes. These were fun planes, like driving a Model T flivver, I guess, compared to--

Fris: I guess so.

Frank: Yes, you know, but I'm saying--wondering if the same sort of concept applies to a jet to, say, a Corsair or the later--

Fris: Well, I think it's just fun flying, and to me, when you've got an airplane with all that power and will do all these things, it's fun flying. I enjoyed flying the SNJ. I mean, that was fun to me, but, once you got in the Corsair, why, you wanted to stay with that one rather than go back or to go to something better which was a jet.

Frank: What was top speed on a Corsair?

Fris: Well, around 400, I guess, was the top speed. Now, that's going down hill.

Batha: Did you have any preference, the attack role over the fighter role?

Fris: Well, I would rather go to the attack role anytime than the fighter role. In the fighter role, if you're in fighters, what you do--and I heard Gen Thrash say the same thing when we were down in school at Quantico--is as a fighter you're going to sit up there in orbit or you're going to sit on the strip alert and wait for something to come in. In the attack role you're going out there and you're going to see the ordnance that you're dropping, and you know you're helping those troops on the ground, and it's just a completely different thing. I would take attack any time over fighter, no hesitation.

Frank: That's interesting. I didn't know what--I would have no way of knowing, but it's an interesting concept. Did you train in any other type of an aircraft, conventional type aircraft, before going to jets? For instance, did you train in the AD?

Fris: No. I flew the AD while I was down at Cherry Point.

Frank: Oh, you did?

Fris: Yes.

Frank: Let's talk about some of the planes that--of this era that you flew before going up to jets, for instance. The AD, for instance--

Fris: I flew the AD, not in a squadron, but I flew the AD. I flew with VMCJ down at Cherry Point and they had the AD5W. This was that thing with the big old antenna under the belly, you know?

Frank: Uh huh.

Fris: And that was almost like a ball, but it was a pretty steady flying airplane. I used to fly that with them because while I was down at Cherry Point they were testing an airborne radar concept that would eliminate ground return. It never did, but, anyway, I flew with them and then I flew--they had an ECM aircraft, the AD, and then also they had just a regular AD up at the Marine Wing Service Group, and I would fly--

Frank: One of those tandem seated jobs?

Fris: Well, the ones at the service group weren't tandem, but the ones down at Cherry Point, or at the VMCJ were, a radar thing, and also the ECM thing were tandems.

Frank: The AD could take a greater ordnance load than the World War II bomber--what was it, the B-25?

Fris: No, the B-17.

Frank: The B-17, right. That was a hell of a plane, I guess.

Fris: Oh, it was, it was really quite an airplane and a real good flyer, steady, a pleasure, again, to fly that thing.

Frank: Did you fly anything else at 312 while you were there besides the Corsair?

Fris: No, 312--all they had was Corsairs.

Frank: All they had was the Corsair, and you remained with 312 until, I guess, 1950, '49.

Fris: '49. I think in November of '49 I went over to the station.

Frank: Yes, I think you did.

Fris: And then--right, because I was exec of a station squadron, whatever that was. It was a big outfit. They had everything . . .

Frank: Well, what did they have you doing in the squadron? You were personnel officer, you were aircraft inspector.

Fris: I was the personnel officer most of the time. I was a mess officer for a while. Every time we'd go on a maneuver I'd be the mess officer.

Frank: Didn't they have any ground personnel or admin personnel in the squadron?

Fris: Oh, yes, uh huh.

Frank: As personnel officer?

Fris: Right, but they didn't have an adjutant, a ground adjutant, and they did not, so an aviator had to do that.

Frank: An aviator had to do it.

Fris: We had an adjutant and a personnel officer and both were aviators. Now, they did have the enlisted that were in there and were administrators.

Frank: August '48, I see, you went aboard the Tarawa and then the Valley Forge. I guess this was all carrier qual?

Fris: Right.

Frank: All right. This was all, let's see, El Centro, forward echelon, you went out there for exercises and ordnance fire?

Fris: Right . . .

Frank: What was the general attitude and feeling in the Marine Corps aviation at this time? This was the time of cutbacks and constraints and everything else.

Fris: Yes. Everybody really worried about what was going to go on, whether or not there would even be a Marine Corps. All of that stuff was going on, but the main thing that we saw again as pilots in the outfit was that the money was cut back so far, as far as fuel was concerned, that pilots could only fly four hours a month, and we even kept on the board for each pilot how much fuel he used to get his four hours. One of the things you should never do for safety purposes is to go out of automatic rich on takeoff, the mixture. You go to automatic rich and you don't go out of automatic rich until you get up and pull back power to the regular climb speed. Well, guys were, to try to get under that to try to show that they used less fuel than the other guy, why, they would even go back to automatic rich from full rich right after takeoff. I mean, they were doing all kinds of things to try to cut down on that.

Frank: Any accidents from that?

Fris: Not to my knowledge. Another thing we did if we didn't have personnel, and the pilots would actually--we would go out and be the plane captain for each other. There weren't enough plane captains out there so somebody had to go out and get the airplane ready and what have you and pull the chocks and send them off. I remember one guy in particular had broken his back. He had bailed out of a Corsair once before and he had broken his back, and I guess he was still in a cast, and

the cast sort of stuck out. I know he was going to go pull a chock this one time for a guy that he was plane captain for and when he bent over, that cast caught in the wing and just flipped him up and right down on his back. It's a wonder it didn't really just ruin him again, but it didn't. He laughed about the thing, but it dazed him for a while. In fact, the pilot was up there in the plane wondering where the hell he was, but he was under the wing flat on his back, but--

End Tape 2, Side 1

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Tape 2, Side 2

Frank: You were saying that the constraints were really making it rough.

Fris: And then the other thing that was aggravating there at the end, say, the fiscal year at that time ended 30 June, and in May the group, the outfit above us--they would come out and say, "Okay, now you've got all of this money and you've got to fly it before 30 June," and then we'd be flying day and night just burning up the fuel, for that particular period of time, and, of course, we, the junior pilots in there, kept wondering what the hell was going on. Couldn't

they manage that better than that, that they had this money all the time. I had been told that what they did is the group held back money and then the wing would hold back money and then the Navy would hold back money, and, all along the chain of command, and then when the time came to--or it was the end of the fiscal year, why, they would have all this wad of money and they'd have to get it burned up, so they would just tell all the outfits to fly like mad. We went from nothing, four hours a month, to just flying everything we could day and night.

Frank: Of course, at this period there was not only the fiscal restraints on the Marine Corps budget, on Navy as a whole, but the Marine Corps also, but also the threat, real threat, to the existence of the Corps and to naval aviation, Marine Corps aviation. Were you aware of this down in the--

Fris: No. It just appeared to us, people would talk, and at the club at happy hour or something, but that's as much as I ever got into it. I wasn't aware of that other stuff.

Frank: What about relationships between air and ground people? There's always been a schism as long as there's been a Marine Corps aviation. Any better or any worse at this time?

Fris: Well, I don't know. I would still say it's about the same. There are periods when it seems to get a little better,

and I look--for instance, when I got out of postgraduate school I came down to El Toro for a refresher course and at that time, I think it was, they had the ground colonels and lieutenant colonels from down at Pendleton would come up to El Toro and they had these two-seater jets, and they would take them on some of these missions to show them, right through the initial briefing, the whole thing that they had to go through, take them on the flight. Of course, they were listening on the radio and what have you--go ahead and run through one of these missions and back, and then the debrief and everything that had to go on. It was just an education to show them what is involved rather than a guy jumps in an airplane and flies down there, drops his bombs, comes back, and runs to the club and has a couple of martinis, and away he goes. And so this did, I think, a lot of good there. I still think that you're always going to have that schism to some extent, and then I saw it up here when I had aviation. When I had programs it was there, and I don't understand it. I can never understand why people on either side take the attitude they do because to me the Marine Corps is the only outfit with the combined arms and you need each other real badly, and why they resort to this, I don't know. It's just beyond me.

Frank: Lack of understanding, perhaps?

Fris: I don't know. I wonder sometimes if it's the understanding. I would think, though, if they understood it, that we

wouldn't have the thing, so I really don't know. I don't know what the answer is.

Frank: I'm sure you're not the only Marine that's ever gone up to general officer's rank that's puzzled by it.

Fris: I really am, and I know the people that I've had work for me always, I keep telling them that, look, don't fight it. We need each other. We're both there. They need us real badly, and one thing I used to stress is the fact that we were the ones that were in support. Those ground Marines were really the ones that we had to support, and we are the supporting arms.

Frank: Yes, that's absolutely right.

Fris: The ground Marines are running the operation. Air is in support. If you go with that attitude, why, it will work out all right.

Frank: Well, of course, those were the two missions of Marine Corps aviation from the beginning; number one, support the ground effort; number two, go aboard carriers in support of the Navy while we're--

Fris: Right.

Frank: Tell me, about this time helicopters are coming into their own. What was the attitude of the fighter pilot--

Fris: Wanted no part of it, wanted no part of helicopters. In fact, some of my contemporaries were pulled out of the squadron to go to helicopter training, and, really drug their feet all the way, but once they got into it, they really enjoyed it. They said it really was fun flying the helicopter, but the resistance was there. I mean, there was no--

Frank: I understand John Smith at this time was the aviation detail officer up at Headquarters and that if he got a letter requesting--and I'm trying to think of the way it's written--any aviator, any fighter pilot--I think it applied only to fighter pilots as opposed to transport pilots, any fighter pilot who wanted to go to helicopters, he'd transfer them to East Jabroo--

Fris: I'm not aware of that.

Frank: And he was--that they were dragging their feet. Of course, I think on the higher echelons the philosophy was different. They were concerned about air frames and how it would affect the overall budget, aviation budget, with the helicopters that were being brought into the system ought to be--it cut the conventional strength of conventional aircraft.

Fris: Yes, and especially in the area of arming helicopters. I was up at Headquarters Marine Corps, when that battle was going on, and the attack pilots were just really fighting this thing tooth and nail. They didn't want to arm the helicopters at all because they said, "We will do the support," air support with the A-4's at times still, I guess, but--

Frank: This was 1960 when you were up there?

Fris: Right. Well, I got up there in December of '57 to the summer of '60.

Frank: '57, right.

Fris: So it was during that period of time when there was a big todo about the arming of the helicopters, and the helicopter people and a lot of the other aviators wanted to arm the helicopters, but there were a couple of guys up there at Headquarters Marine Corps, that would have no part of it whatsoever. I mean, they were really adamant, no logic. It was all emotion.

Frank: Well, if you'll recall, when Gen Greene took over as Commandant, one of the points he made was that he was opposed to the arming of helicopters. This was in '65.

Fris: I don't recall that in particular, but the thing that

really brought--I still think today we wouldn't have armed helicopters if we didn't go to Vietnam.

Frank: Yes.

Fris: And that's where it--

Frank: That's right.

Fris: And I know that Gen McCutcheon up there at Headquarters Marine Corps, and also Gen Robertshaw, he says, "God damn, those guys down there want," "they're out there doing it, they want guns on those things and we better get them some guns on them."

Frank: Well, this is very interesting because it brings up the attitude or the position of the Marine Corps on helicopters. The people who first had the armed helicopters was the Army, arming their helicopters, and the AirCav Division and so on, and it seems to me that whereas the Marine Corps developed the concept of vertical envelopment and the employment of the helicopters that they kind of sat back on their laurels and the Army ran away with this thing.

Fris: Well, I think there's two things that are--first off, the Army didn't have any other air support, so they wanted to arm those helicopters. That was their air support. They, in their mind, could not depend on the Air Force to furnish it.

Frank: For tactical air.

Fris: Right. The Marine Corps had people in it, though, that were saying, "Look, we've got another means of providing you the tactical air, so don't you worry about that. You go ahead and haul your troops and people and what have you and we'll support you with fixed wing aircraft." I think that's the thing that kept it off, you know, delayed it.

Frank: And, of course, there's a good argument. There are many disabilities that the helicopter has in the combat environment, does it not?

Fris: Oh, yes. The first thing, in an A4, on any jet aircraft you make a run and you drop your bombs, and then you go again Now, if you got four aircraft up there, say, making runs, there's still quite a delay between planes in getting those things down there, but a gunship can get down there and he can stay right in the circle, right there with people and provide them with support that they need.

Frank: But at the same time, it's a good target.

Fris: Oh, yes, it's a good target. I mean, that's the tough part about it, but if it's required, even though you've got to go in there and do it. The other thing is staying with a movement of helicopters in an A4 and you're doing everything

trying to stay with them where the helicopter can stay right with them and support them on the way.

Frank: Right. Well, I think we're getting a little ahead of ourselves. I want to talk about--now, this two-year period with the squadron was a pretty good learning experience, wouldn't you say?

Fris: Oh, yes, yes, very enjoyable too.

Frank: By now this pretty well indoctrinated you into the brotherhood of aviators, good learning experience. You next went to Junior School. Now, as I recall, at this period of time in the Marine Corps, we've gone through all sorts of highs and lows about education, and if I recall at this time there were two necessities, two major steps were the path of a good career, a successful career in the Marine Corps; number one, to have an article published in the Gazette, and number two, to go through either Junior School or Senior School when you were due. Do you recall this being--

Fris: I don't recall the article in the Gazette. I know that they wanted you to take the Gazette, but I don't recall the writing of the articles, but the two things at that time was a Junior School and also a Senior School, whether it be the Command and Staff, or was it the Senior Course.

Frank: It was the Senior Course at that time.

Fris: Or one of the other high level schools that you had to have to have those two, because I know I got involved in the thing when I went to leave Headquarters Marine Corps, in 1960, and I wanted to go to Hawaii to get in a squadron out there. There was no way they were ever going to send me to Hawaii, and, of course, Mitchell, Col Bob Mitchell at that time, wanted me to go to that plant, to Litton Industries to go on with this MTDS thing. Anyway, I remember Smoke Spanjer was the detail officer at that time, and we went down to see him, so Smoke says, "You're going to have to go to Senior School," so I said, "Well, yes, but I thought that the order says that if you went to postgraduate school, that would be a substitute for the senior course," so he looked it up and there was a date limit on it, and he said, "When did you go?" And I told him, and he said, "Yes, you're okay, so we can send you out to this other thing." So there was a requirement for a Junior School and a Senior School. Now, I couldn't comment on the article for the--

Frank: I think, according to the manual at the time when it set up a optimum career pattern was the--what were they emphasizing? This was September, December, so it was a shortened Junior School.

Fris: Yes, because, see, Korea just broke out.

Frank: That's right.

Fris: As a matter of fact, I was at El Toro, and we all were saying, "Look, how about canceling my orders?" We went over--I remember Elmer Glidden was over at the--in personnel in AirFMFPac at the time--and he said, "Well, I can cancel anybody's but you guys. The guys are going to school. There's no way we can get them canceled." So--

Frank: The squadron did go out to Korea?

Fris: Oh, yes, yes. And, so we came back on here to the Junior School, and then because of the Korean thing and the requirement for officers, they shortened it then, and that was the first class that did shorten.

Frank: Yep.

Fris: It was in December, I think.

Frank: That was a three month course. You had a bunch of Reservists there.

Fris: Yes, and that was another story too. God, there were a lot of--

Frank: Yes, a bunch of pissed-off Reservists.

Fris: Oh, they were really, really upset that they were called back there to go to that, and we kept being puzzled by--we said, "Well, that's what we thought you were, were Reserves, and when they needed you, they called you, and that's why you were in the program." But they wanted to change the subject real fast.

Frank: Was it that they wanted to go right into action or they didn't want to be called up at all?

Fris: No, they didn't want to be called up at all. They were upset because they were called up, and that's the part that we couldn't understand.

Frank: Of course, it's four years since the end of the war or five years at most.

Fris: And then the other thing that an awful lot of them were just griping like mad about, all the money they were making on the outside. Now, they get called in here and they're taking that reduction in pay, and then, of course, it was interesting to note that after the Korean War so many of them stayed on on continuous SWAGs and what have you, you know, and we kept wondering where all this money was that they were making when they came in, but that--

Frank: Yes. I guess that really didn't endear the Reservists to the Regulars?

Fris: It did not. No, and their attitude was real bad at the school too. The instructors were upset by it, by their attitude at the school. It was bad.

Frank: Well, I think that went on. I imagine you had hoped that you would be going to Korea with the squadron, go back to the squadron now.

Fris: Yes.

Frank: You wound up at the air facility at Quantico.

Fris: Well, they sent me there to stand by. What had happened, before the Korean thing came out we had an exec in 312, Howie Walters, and he talked me into putting in for postgraduate school at that time. He said, "You really ought to put in for this because of your background and everything. The Marine Corps needs these people." And I really respected this guy. He's really one outstanding officer, and so I went ahead and put in for it. Well, unbeknownst to me, when I was down there at the school the board met and selected me to go to postgraduate school, so then the school wasn't going to start until August, so they sent me over to the air station.

Frank: In a casual status.

Fris: Right, so they made me the Special Services Officer over there, I guess, awaiting to go to postgraduate school.

Frank: And this was out at Annapolis.

Fris: Right. Well, it started at Annapolis.

Frank: Annapolis and goes out to Monterey.

Fris: Right. There was a big move on to move it to Monterey, and this admiral that was there finally got it moved out there, I guess.

Frank: Well, now, I have something--okay. You were at Quantico from '50 to '51. That's right.

Fris: Right.

Frank: And from July to December of '51--

Fris: That's right.

Frank: There's a mistake--at Annapolis.

Fris: Right, and then they moved to Monterey.

Frank: Well, now, this was strictly electrical, advanced electrical engineering, aviation or general?

Fris: No, general. Engineering electronics was the name of the course, so it was everything electrical.

Frank: Where is this? This is not the Naval Academy? It's at the communications--

Fris: No, it was at the Naval Academy.

Frank: Oh, it is at--

Fris: No. That's where it was until December of '51, and then they moved to Monterey.

Frank: I see.

Fris: They built a complete postgraduate school. Navy post-graduate school now is a complete school.

Frank: Right. That's right. The hotel--what was it called?

Fris: The Del Monte Hotel, they--

Frank: Del Monte Hotel, right.

Fris: They went into it, and that's where we held our classes--

Frank: Yeah.

Fris: --and while they were building it, and, of course, since then, why, they've--for many years.

Frank: Got the whole post graduate--

Fris: And then--excuse me--and besides the engineering schools, they also have the Navy line school, they call it. I guess all line officers go there to get updated on the--I don't know just what. I've never--

Frank: Well, they've got a number--where, at Monterey?

Fris: At Monterey.

Frank: Oh, yes.

Fris: The same location.

Frank: Oh, it's a beautiful location.

Fris: It is that, it is that.

Frank: It's great out there. Did you get a Master's degree?

Fris: No, I didn't get it.

Frank: No, it was just--were there any advanced degree programs there?

Fris: There were, yes.

Frank: And from there you went to the training group for jet transitional training from July to October '54. I guess this was at El Toro?

Fris: At El Toro, prior to--and that's where--at that time was when they had these ground officers--

Frank: Coming up and--yes. What kind of jet were you transitioning to?

Fris: It was an F9F-2.

Frank: Panther jet, was it?

Fris: Yes, Panther jet, F9F-2.

Frank: Yes.

Fris: And then when we went to--we went from there, then, directly to Korea, and we went to VMF-115, and they had F9F-5's which was a later version of the thing and was a--

Frank: I'm trying to have a--on my outline here I have you went through jet transitional training from July to October '54. Okay. And then you went out to Korea in November, okay.

Fris: In the first way--well, we got there in October, actually.

Frank: October, right.

Fris: And I was assigned to 115 and was the exec of 115 until I think March or April, somewhere along in there when the squadron came back.

Frank: April, uh huh.

Fris: And then I was assigned up as the wing electronics officer.

Frank: Yes.

Fris: For the rest of my tour. They took the guys out that weren't ready to go back yet, hadn't completed their tour and gave them other jobs there in the wing.

Frank: Uh huh. And you stayed out in Korea or about, oh, about a year or 13 months.

Fris: Well, from October to December, I guess.

Frank: December. Frank, you were asking a question of Gen--

Batha: Right. I had thought as I listened to Gen Fris's comments that he kind of missed out on both World War II and

Korea as being an operational pilot, and my question was, didn't he feel kind of cheated in that situation, having to spend his time in school, and I think he had a good reply there.

Fris: Yes, and I've mentioned that when we were out on the west coast in that air warning squadron we were trying our damndest to get overseas. I mean, we were ready to go. It was a good outfit and would have done a real good job. And we had a CO at the time, I guess, that from the words that we got, that he always kept telling the group that we weren't ready, and we were getting pretty aggravated at this thing. Finally, I guess this one night we were at the club, and this was while we were at that Camp Gillespie, that outlying field. At the club this one night we were discussing it, and we finally said, "well, hell, why don't we just go over and ask the CO for a transfer?" So a couple of us went over and told him that we wanted a transfer. We wanted to get out because we wanted to go overseas, and it's obvious to us that this outfit wasn't going to go overseas at all.

Well, the next we know there were four of us, the next day, as a matter of fact, called down to the group CO's office and were told that we were going to be court martialed for instigating a mutiny. And I guess this one guy that got called first, and I was called second, the first guy was a lawyer in civilian life, and he was a pretty sharp individual. I was called second, and then when they finished with me, they said, "Well, the other two guys don't have to come,"

and they just really read us off and said that, "If anything like this happens again or you guys even talk about it, you're going to get court martialed." They had the book out in front of us and everything else.

Frank: Scaring a bunch of young officers?

Fris: Right, and they did. They scared the hell out of us, so then before we went overseas, though, we did get a new CO. They brought a new guy in, and this other guy was moved out to some staff job of some kind, but it was just a real bad scene all the way.

Frank: Well, of course, in hindsight, I suppose, from the point of maturity, you have to figure that the--maybe the squadron commander and even the group commander were frustrated also, that--

Fris: Well, the squadron commander wasn't, really, because he was scared to go. He just didn't want to go.

Frank: Oh, well, that's--

Fris: And he told us--I guess he was in civilian life, he was a director in Hollywood or some damn thing, but like, for instance, we'd go on a maneuver, we were on a maneuver--well, right there at the home base, but we had to go out and live

in the boondocks at Oak Grove when we first formed up, and we'd be out, living out there, and Christ, he's back in the BOQ living. You know, he'd sneak off back and go to the BOQ. He wouldn't even live outside or anything else, and it was really a bad scene all the way.

Frank: Well, that was bad.

Fris: Yes, it was, and it was bad for a lot of good guys. There were some really outstanding people in that outfit, and, like I say, was ready to go, but he just kept talking them into delaying us, so--

Frank: Yes. And, of course, that situation was not too much different from a lot of the very senior officers in the war, World War II, who had gone into aviation, say, in World War I, some, or after World War I, and had trained and by the time of World War II they were too senior to fly, too senior to fly, and I think of any number of them, Mulcahy, and--of course, he flew in World War I, but some--Megee. Some of them got shunted off to Peru on a--on the Naval aviation liaison type of thing.

Fris: But, then, like I say, that was World War II, and then the Korean thing came about, and then tried our damnest again to get our orders canceled and couldn't, and then of course, unbeknownst to me, I put in for that postgraduate

school, much earlier before we even worried about what was going on in Korea, and then while I'm in school down there, why, they selected me to go to postgraduate school, and there I was again, see, for that--

Frank: Yes, but I can't see where you could have any regrets because it all works out.

Fris: Oh, it all worked out. Like I say, I was just telling him that there was no one more shocked than I was when I got selected for general simply because of the lack of any combat.

Frank: Combat, yes, sure. What did, in terms of career, did having gone to--did going to this postgraduate school mean? It means that you were more, not in a rut, but in a slot and an area--

Fris: It certainly did that, but, again, like I say, this Howie Walters had convinced me that that was really the thing to do, to go there, and he kept saying that it wouldn't hurt you because it would go as one of these top level schools that people have that are competing for higher rank. So he said, "You won't get hurt that way at all and we need them." So, like I said, I still highly respect that gentleman. He's really a dandy, and so I went ahead and put in for it, knowing, of course, that I was going to be put in one slot.

Frank: Was this a forward thinking school? Were they working on thing--

Fris: Oh, yes.

Frank: --things that had a future? They weren't just--

Fris: Well, of course, there was an awful lot of it, theoretical stuff that they were on and what have you. As a matter of fact, when we went to that school at Harvard during World War II they were telling us about TV at that time, and I was absolutely amazed to think that this thing--but then they explained it, sort of went over the thing, and that's the first--

Frank: The theory was there. It was just--

Fris: Oh, yes. Well, they had even tested it by that time.

Frank: Well, I can remember the World's Fair of '38 and '39, they had it.

Fris: Yes, they actually had it at that time, and then the one professor that was telling us, he said that's one thing that's really going to change things in the world after the war, when they can get back to that.

Frank: If you had only known enough to buy stock. From there you went up to Headquarters, Aviation Electronics Branch?

Fris: From Cherry Point.

Frank: Well, that's right. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. You went to--we were talking about jet training. We didn't get to jet transition training.

Fris: No, the jet transition training, I went there to El Toro, and then in October I went over to Korea, was in 115 until April, I guess.

Frank: That's right, that's right, we did.

Fris: And then I went up to the wing aviation electronics office. That was the one--the MOS that I got as a graduate engineer, the additional MOS, that was the only billet in the wing that called for that, so it was obvious that that's where I would go. Besides the fact that the guy who was up there didn't have that training and he was leaving, so he came down and talked to me and said how about coming up there to relieve him. He was looking for a relief, and so I was sent up there, then, to the wing.

Frank: Were you overtrained for that job?

Fris: I would say overtrained for that job in particular, you know, in the combat unit itself. Where you really use it is in the R&D area and what have you. You really use the

training in there, but it's awful good to have that as a background, for the limitations of what you can do in the field. You're not designing anything or anything like that or reviewing any designs. You're just trying to make the equipment work and make sure that the communication links are in.

Frank: You were now a lieutenant colonel, I assume, or a senior major?

Fris: I was a major. I was a major.

Frank: A major.

Fris: Because I didn't make lieutenant colonel until I came to Headquarters in 19--

Frank: '57?

Fris: --57, yes.

Frank: Yes. The--from a layman's point of view or as you would explain to a layman--I want to get back to this jet transition training. What did it involve, I mean, aside from learning the instruments and so on? How--

Fris: Well, to fly a jet airplane. The big thing is that you've got to learn what a jet engine is, how it operates,

its limitations, basically, on what you can and can't do with the thing. It has different systems from what a propeller plan has, so you went through that just to be able to fly the airplane, and then you went through the fighter tactics and attack tactics, dropped bombs, and what have you. It was an operational--it was a transition from the propeller to the jet and then going into the full realm of weaponry and--

Frank: Yes. I still have a picture in my mind of the aviators of the '20's and '30's of getting out there and working with their mechs, tearing down the engines and getting their hands dirty. I guess that all changed, by the beginning of World War II or even in the late '30's that all changed. The aviator, the pilot, wasn't involved with this stuff at all. I mean--

Fris: Well, he didn't actually do any of that work. Now, you have to go through a course and pass a course on the engine and different systems on the plane, but--and you got to know how it works--but as far as actually working on it, no, there's not--I know a lot of aviators can't work on a car.

Frank: I was just thinking what if they made everyone who drove a car know how it worked and so on.

Fris: Yes. There would be a lot of parking places.

Frank: Yes. I guess there would be, I guess there would be. Okay. So you were with the wing for two years and then up to

Aviation Electronics Branch. Your assignment there was Electronics Logistics Officer and you became head of the Aviation Logistics Section, the Aviation Electronics Branch. You were a member of the Marine Corps Electronics Advisory Board. What did this all involve?

Fris: Well, you mean the job itself?

Frank: Yes, sir.

Fris: Well, it was procuring all of the equipment for--I mean, you were the customer between the field and the technical branch to procure the equipment, to get to the field units, and you worked on all of the T/E's, table of equipment, the allowances and what have you with--

Frank: Are these blue dollars or green dollars you're working with now?

Fris: Green dollars, mostly. There were also blue dollars, and what went in the airplane itself. Now, for instance, we would want to get equipment in there for the TPQ10 or what have you, so we would have to go argue that particular point, and in most cases the blue dollars, the equipment that was in there, was what was in the Navy airplanes anyway, the TACAN and the radios and stuff like that, so there was no big problem, but the specialty type equipment we would have

to worry with the Navy on the blue dollars in that area. Most of it was in the control squadron type stuff, MAT(U)s, those areas. Now the MAT(U)s were blue dollars also, the Marine Air Traffic Control units.

Frank: Air traffic control.

Fris: Yes, those are blue dollars. So, I worked with all of those, and then, of course, the big thing that I worked with then, as I said earlier, was when I reported in they had just signed the contract on the MTDS, so I was the--

Frank: You were on the ground floor with that?

Fris: Right, and I was--for aviation I was sort of the project officer for that.

Frank: Well, that was kind of fortuitous. The timing was right.

Fris: That's all, the timing was right.

Frank: Did they short tour you? No, you couldn't have been short toured because you were there for three years.

Fris: No. I went the full three-year tour.

Frank: Three-year tour.

Fris: And then I went from there to--that's where I was saying that I wanted to go to Hawaii. They always told you that once you had a tour at Headquarters, you could go anywhere you wanted. So I wanted to go to Hawaii and try to get in the squadron out there, but that was not to be, and so then they sent me to Litton Industries as a liaison officer.

Frank: Working out of the--out of Santa Ana?

Fris: Well, no. I actually went to the plant to be the liaison officer on the MTDS program. I reported in July of 1960. I reported in to the plant. We had a liaison officer there, LtCol Ed Harper was there at the time, and then Ed was ready to leave and he wanted to get a squadron, I guess, and so he wanted out of there by that time. So then they sent me to that particular job with the idea that as soon as that equipment came out to be tested I would move on down and be the CO of the test unit.

Frank: Oh. Litton was where?

Fris: In Canoga Park, California, at that time is where the plant was.

Frank: And you had an office right in the plant?

Fris: Right in the plant.

Frank: Worked right with the people there?

Fris: Right, uh huh.

Frank: What was the nature of your duties?

Fris: Well, really, looking over the thing to see that we were getting what we were contracting for to make sure that if there were any things to come about that they couldn't do, to provide a particular capability in the equipment that I was to contact the people back here and get a decision on that and give them the pros and cons of the technical aspects of it. Also, Gen Hochmuth was the R&D man at the time, and he used to call me all the time because of these overruns, and they were--we were always re-estimating because there were overruns and the thing was delivered a couple of years late, and so they'd keep saying, "Well, when is it going to be delivered." They'd tell us two months, and I'd give them my estimate which would be an awful lot longer than that.

I worked with the Navy inspector's office out there and I've forgotten what they were called at that time. The Air Force has taken over all of them now, where they have the auditors and everything else in there.

Frank: Uh huh.

Fris: And I know at one time I was upset with the Litton outfit because they didn't have a quality control organization. I mean

they didn't have anyone in charge of quality control, nothing, and I kept saying that I didn't see how they could possibly build any equipment without having quality control. I argued with them and argued with them, but they just didn't want to put one in. So I finally told them, I said, "Look, I'm going to take some action," and I didn't tell them what I did. I went to the Navy there in Los Angeles and talked to the captain that was there and outlined the whole thing and told him what I think they ought to come in, and I said come in with the surprise inspections. I said, "Even if you told them now, they couldn't really put together a quality control organization from scratch to do very much, but I think you ought to come in with a surprise inspection and see what you find." Well, of course, they came in there and found that there was nothing there. Well, they monitored the contract and they had a lot of clout, I guess, so Litton finally told them that they would put in a quality control organization. There were all kinds of things like this that went on in the running of the program. In checking out each individual operator hut, there were three consoles in each hut plus a teletype machine in each one of those huts, and as each one of the huts came off the production line they had a test outfit that was supposed to test all of the functions and see whether or not they worked.

Well, they had this on a 24-hour basis again because they were so far behind, and I would go out there and try to find out where they were. They didn't even have a log book, anything.

They didn't have any guidance for the engineer that came out there to check it out. He would just go start checking out on any area that he wanted to, and regardless--and he never even talked to the guy that went off, that he relieved. Well, this was one of the things I really had problems with back here, and in fact, I remember Sam Dressin who was back at the Bureau of Ships at that time, a lieutenant colonel at the time, and Sam came out there and I said--and he couldn't believe this. He told me outright, he said, "I really can't believe that they would be that bad." And I said, "Come on with me," and we went out there and we went in this one hut, and I said, "Sam, you ask the questions. I don't want to prejudice anything. You just ask the questions." And Sam would say, "Well, where are you in this thing?" And the engineer that was there would tell him what he was doing.

"Well, can you show me where you are on a chart or how far it is to completion of the entire checking out of the hut?" He couldn't show anything, nothing. Like I say, they didn't have a log book. They didn't have a check-off list. They didn't have a procedure of any kind, nothing. As a matter of fact, in order to write the test procedures for the testing of the equipment in plant and also for the reliability testing--they had to run it for so many hours--we brought the Marines up, and the Marines that were in plant actually wrote the damn thing. They didn't even write those, and we wrote those things. I mean, it was really bad. There was no organization there whatsoever.

Frank: How did Litton get away with this for so long?

Fris: I really don't know. I don't know how they got away with it. Now, one of the things they would do, of course, is getting you in the back. Like I say, they would come and tell Headquarters Marine Corps, how bad I was, that I was the one that was causing all kinds of problems, and, unfortunately, there were some people at the plant and at Headquarters that agreed with them. But, like I say, all you had to do was come out there and you could see how bad it was. There was just nothing, there was no coordination whatsoever. In fact, the time Sam was out there, then, we asked this guy, we said, "Well, how about getting your boss, then?" So we got his boss and he comes in, and this guy is in charge of all of the check-out. So we asked him, and he said, "Oh, well, no, you won't find that in here. We have that in the chart back here in this other room." So we said, "Okay, let's go back there," and so we went in there and asked, "Okay, now, show us what that chart tells us."

So he starts going over this chart and says this is done, and we said, "No, we just checked with this guy." He said, "Oh, yeah," and he just scratched it out just like that without checking on anything. It was just--all they were trying to do evidently is put on a show, and I think an awful lot of incompetency, and there were a lot of people in there working on that program that just had no idea of organizing things. It's one of these mistakes that a lot of people make,

I guess, is a guy is a terrific engineer. He can really check out the equipment, but the big mistake is in making him manager, and he doesn't know what door to go into hardly. He just is not a manager. He's a wonderful engineer, but he can't manage anything, and that's what they had, an awful of people strewn throughout that plant.

Frank: High paid people?

Fris: Oh, high paid. And, see, it grew so fast. See, they had nothing before they got that ATDS, the Navy contract for the Airborne Tactical Data System, and then they got us and they just grew from nothing, and it was just a lot of growing pains.

Frank: Isn't a job like that fraught with a lot of dangers for the liaison officer winding up in the hip pocket of the company?

Fris: Oh, yes.

Frank: They can make it very, very pleasant and--

Fris: They tried with me, on gifts and stuff, and I'd say no, and I remember one time the president of that particular division came to me, and he wanted to get something for me, and I said no, and he says, "Look, nobody will know about

it. We'll just write it off on lunch or what have you." And I said, "Look, but I'll know about it and that's enough for me." I just didn't want any part of it at all. And they would do it. I mean, they'll try it. And they'll try to get you to, well, to alter your reports like I was saying earlier. They tried everything to get me to alter the reports, and I said, "There's just no way I can. This is the way it is, and I'm working for the Marine Corps and I'm going to work for them until the last day I'm in there, and if I don't think that it's right for the Marine Corps, that's the way it's going to be reported."

Now, I would love to report something that's good because I'd like to see this equipment in our outfits too, but until it's good, I'm not going to report it as being good.

Frank: Is this the general nature of things in developments of this type? It's like pulling teeth?

Fris: Oh, yes. It's not any different in any of them, I don't think. I think all of them do that. They do their damndest to do everything in the world to make it look good. I think that's one of the things that's wrong with our country is that we're looking more for cosmetics rather than the real basics in getting things done.

Frank: Well, this must not have been too easy a period, then, for the year and a few months that you were there at Litton, constant strain, constant pressure.

Fris: It was no fun at all, I'll tell you, and you just have to keep plugging. You've got to--

Frank: Long hours?

Fris: Oh, yes, and as a matter of fact, one interesting thing was that at one of the social functions that--the people in the area that we lived in this little area, one of the wives that was next door to us--he worked for another company--and she mentioned it to my wife, my wife was saying, "Well, he's gone all the time. You see what time he gets in late at night." And she said, "Yeah, but he gets paid overtime, doesn't he?" She was convinced that--

Frank: That the Marine Corps paid you overtime?

Fris: Yes, that I got paid overtime. But I had no objection to that part, the working and stuff like that because when I came in the Marine Corps I felt that that was it and you worked 24 hours as a Marine. The part that I had problems with was the deal of trying to falsify stuff to keep a program going, and I wouldn't become a part of that at all.

Frank: And they're trying to stab you in the back meanwhile back here at Headquarters?

Fris: Oh, as a matter of fact, at one time Gen Anderson called me back here. No, I guess this was after I was back

here in Bureau of Ships. Well, they were trying to stab me in the back even out there, but when I was back here at the Bureau of Ships they evidently got to this admiral down here who was my boss in the Bureau of Ships and really ran me down. Because the next thing I knew Gen Anderson and Gen Robertshaw said, "Meet us at the admiral's office," and I met them there, and they did all the talking. I just sat there, but what they were saying was, these people at Litton Industries are just trying to really berate me to get me out of there because I'm holding their feet to the fire. All of the stuff that he hears is simply just--I mean, that was their motive, so they tried everything, and they tried it with the Marines while they were out there. So, I just think that you still just have to do what you think is right and go that way.

Frank: Well, it's 10 of 12:00 now. I'm just wondering whether or not this might be a good place to stop for today because then go to the next session going on down to MACS-3 and see how things worked out.

Fris: Fine.

Frank: Okay, fine.

Fris: That would be fine with me.

Frank: Very good.

Fris: Sure.

Frank: Thank you, General.

Fris: Okay. Then let's--now I'm going to leave on the...

End Tape 2, Side 2

Session III - 13 January 1981

Tape 1, Side 1

Frank: We left off last time, General, where you had done your tour with Litton Industries and were now going down to take command of MACS-3, AirFMFPac, and I guess AirFMFPac was still in existence. Gen Nickerson hadn't successfully done away with it, and you might want to comment on that if you have any knowledge of the demise of AirFMFPac.

Fris: Well, I don't know what went into the background of the thing. I'm sure that what they were considering at the time was that it was an extra staff that you had to go through and sort of a merger of the air and ground, and so when they did that, I think it was Gen Kier that was there at the time. Gen Kier, in fact, was AirFMFPac, and we worked directly for him in that test unit, and then when they got rid of AirFMFPac, why, then he went to Hawaii as the deputy commander there, I guess.

Fris: Sure.

Frank: Thank you, General.

Fris: Okay. Then let's--now I'm going to leave on the...

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Session III - 13 January 1981

FRIS 3

Tape 1, Side 1

Frank: We left off last time, General, where you had done your tour with Litton Industries and were now going down to take command of MACS-3, AirFMFPac, and I guess AirFMFPac was still in existence. Gen Nickerson hadn't successfully done away with it, and you might want to comment on that if you have any knowledge of the demise of AirFMFPac.

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Frank: For air.

Fris: Right, yes.

Frank: Of course, for a long time--

Fris: No, deputy commander. He just went there as deputy--

Frank: Deputy commander.

Fris: --commander.

Frank: Deputy commander at FMFPac, if I recall, for a long time had been an air officer, been an air general officer.

Fris: Right.

Frank: But on the other hand, that doesn't hold true because you also had an air officer--air officers--who had been CG's, FMFPac, Megee--

Fris: MeGee was.

Frank: Carson Roberts and--

Fris: Well, Carson Roberts was--Carson Roberts went there while AirFMFPac was still in existence, and Kier replaced him.

Frank: As deputy?

Fris: No. Kier replaced him as AirFMFPac. I think that Carson Roberts went there as FMFPac, I think.

Frank: Oh, yeah. He was FMFPac there, right, right.

Fris: And then Krulak, I think, replaced him, if I recall.

Frank: But what I'm saying is that it didn't necessarily follow that the deputy FMFPac was an air officer.

Fris: Right, right.

Frank: At the time AirFMFPac was dropped AirFMFLant was also or that remained for a while, I think.

Fris: Oh, I thought AirFMFLant--

Frank: Had gone out, they had been phased out at the same time?

Fris: No, not at the same time. They were--well, I think AirFMFLant was dropped later.

Frank: Later. I think so.

Fris: Because it seems to me that--yes, I believe that--I've forgotten.

Frank: I don't remember, but I--

Fris: But they were not at the same time.

Frank: If not at the same time, and I recall that the controversy was over AirFMFPac, that there was--

Fris: Like I say, I wasn't in on that at the time, so I don't know what that controversy was.

Frank: Okay. Now, you went to take over MACS-3 in September '61. Had the state of the art been such that the equipment was now in the hands of the Marine Corps?

Fris: No, it was a test complex and it was in the hands of the Marine Corps for test purposes. It was still an R&D system. There was an R&D test complex that was built, so we were to test that thing to see whether or not it, in fact, could provide what the Marine Corps was looking for and could, in fact, be operated and maintained by Marines because this was one of the biggest worries of everybody concerned, as to whether or not equipment of this complexity could really be operated and maintained by Marines.

Frank: It was too sophisticated.

Fris: Right, wondering whether or not it was. Well, it turned out that it wasn't. The Marines did very well on the thing,

and that was the other--I think I referred to before where I had a group of 18 people up at the plant, and that was supposed to be the cadre that went down with us to sort of--

Frank: El Toro, was it?

Fris: Up at the plant. They were up at the plant.

Frank: Yes, but MACS-3 was at El Toro.

Fris: No, it was at Santa Ana.

Frank: Oh, Santa Ana, okay, that's right.

Fris: So the idea there was or my idea was that with those 18 people, well-trained. See, they were training up there, in fact, helping build the equipment, and they were in the training program that they had up there. They were to come down to be the cadre, and then my idea was that the rest of the squadron T/O should be filled with people that are just regular mine-run Marines, send them to the basic schools and let them come in there and see whether or not they could maintain that. Well, the Chief of Staff at AirFMFPac at that time, I think, was Col Stage, John Stage, and he objected to that. He said, "No," he says, "you'll never get it going. I've been in these programs before and the only thing you can do is to get specialists again. You've got to go in and

pick every man that comes in that organization." And I said, "Well, I disagree," because I thought, again, that we've got to find out whether all Marines can do that. We're not going to be able to pick specialists, special people for every squadron.

So, anyway, I submitted the T/O and stated in there that they ought to be just mine-run Marines and then when AirFMFPac got it, why, he said, no, that he thought that they'd all be all special, picked people, and the people here at Headquarters Marine Corps, had agreed with me anyway. We had discussed this long before, so they said, "Yes, but we're just going to send regular Marines there." Well, there's some disadvantages to that too because we really got some real bums that were sent to that thing. In fact, one guy was sent out of brig from one unit to us to be one of the members to fill the T/O. We had all kinds. Everybody unloaded their dirty laundry on us, and I spent an awful lot of time just handling these cases, either straightening them out or getting them out of the Marine Corps, and then we finally got them straightened out. When we got the unit straightened out, we had some outstanding people in that organization, and, in fact, knew as much or more about that system than the contractor, and especially in the overall system. We had some warrant officers in there that knew that system better than the program manager of the system. They were fantastic people, and, in fact, when we set up a training course of our own men to train Marines for the future systems, these Marines ran the course.

In fact, the plant--the contractor--sent people there that he was going to have as field engineers. So they even came to our course and learned the system right there from the Marines.

So there was no question in our mind that Marines could operate and maintain that. I mean, we proved that was no problem at all, and the big problem we had proved in the testing was that the system was reliable enough. That was our big problem. There were a couple of areas that were really of a concern for a long time, and the concern really came around from the fact that the contractor did not want to correct a problem that we kept pointing out to them. He kept pointing to the radar, that the radar was at fault, which he didn't build, see. This was a--the first hut that processed the radar information, and in it there was a what they call a drum servo that controlled the speed of the magnetic drum. All of this stuff was picked up on a magnetic drum, and it had to be synchronized with the pulse repetition frequency of the radar, and if you didn't synchronize it, everything just went to hell. And day after day that thing would fail, and our Marines figured out a way to correct it, and they said that the --that drum servo that Litton built was just too sophisticated, had too many ways that it could malfunction --because of the sophistication there were too many--

Frank: Variables?

Fris: --variables, and one little thing went out and it threw

everything out, and they even submitted a--our guys even submitted a proposal to them. We couldn't get them to do anything for about a year, and, finally, after about a year somebody up there got the message that, well, we better do it, and they went ahead and did it and we never had another problem with it.

Frank: Getting back to the personnel, any of the people that you salvaged turn out to be these outstanding people that you were talking about or is that a success story?

Fris: No, not really, not really, no, huh huh. Never the--

Frank: They were bums and you couldn't do anything?

Fris: They were bums, and, oh, yes, they were--we gave a lot of administrative discharges, a few BCD's, as a matter of fact. There were some real bad ones that were thrown in there, and all they did was just took up our time, really. That's one of the things I know that we do an awful lot in the service, and I think it's a big mistake because somebody wants to straighten somebody out so they transfer them to someplace else to get rid of their problems, but I really believe that they shouldn't be able to or shouldn't want to transfer anybody like that. You take care of your own dirty laundry, either make Marines out of them or get them out of the service, but don't put them off on somebody else. Then those people in the

unit they were transferred to then, again, have to start up, gathering all of this information against them to build a case to get them out.

Frank: Yes, well, that's the story of any of the services.

Fris: It is, yes.

Frank: Let me ask--

Batha: I've got one more question.

Frank: Yes, sure.

Batha: On the personnel issue, what was Plan B if you found out the equipment had been too sophisticated for Marines to--

Fris: We would cancel the program.

Batha: And we would have stayed with our manual control?

Fris: Right, or probably have gone on to something that maybe somebody could have shown was less sophisticated, to get, say, partially go into this system rather that full bore.

Batha: You know, everything we look at is much more--requires more and more technical expertise, and essentially everything

we're looking at now, it's the same situation, and are we going to have to limit ourselves? Is that the philosophy? What kind of philosophy did you receive from Headquarters as far as limitations on the ability to service our equipment? Had you gotten any guidance from them?

Fris: No, the only guidance I got was to test it and see whether or not Marines could, in fact, operate and maintain it and would it fulfill our requirements, and was it reliable enough, and that's really what we did and we did it honestly. I said earlier we had a lot of grief from a lot of offices because of it and especially the engineers--excuse me--NAVELEX and also the engineers at the contractors and Litton. We had all kinds of pressure put on us about sending a report saying something good about the equipment, and I said, "As soon as something good comes out of it." Well, we couldn't make the thing work. There was just no way with that drum servo problem. Now, after that was resolved, then we did come out with a lot of--

Batha: In your knowledge, has there ever been anything that we have dropped in this field because we couldn't maintain it with the technicians that we had in the Marine Corps?

Fris: Not to--

Batha: Do you know of anything we've limited ourselves with?

Fris: And that being the only rationale for not--

Batha: Yes, sir.

Fris: No, I don't--I'm not aware of any.

Frank: The--what was the reason for the reluctance of Litton to recognize this was the problem? Of course the money, I guess.

Fris: That was the main reason, see, and, of course, they had a cost plus fixed fee contract, so they would get their costs and everything else, and I--we could never figure it out. We would keep going to them and saying that--

Frank: Ego.

Fris: --the thing is bad. I really don't know. I really don't know. Of course, it was a company that came up real fast with a lot of young people that had all these ideas and everything, and I think maybe they finally matured and said that, "We better get this thing fixed, and can we fix it," and they finally did.

Frank: The other thing I wanted to ask you since I haven't had anybody who has been involved with R&D, exactly what was the R&D process as far as the Marine Corps is concerned--involved?

Fris: On that particular system, you mean?

Frank: Well, on that system or anything else along that line. Just what did it go through?

Fris: Okay. Well, on that particular system there was a study. The Marine Corps got a study group together, and these were people from industry, that studied the problem, the requirement, and then they tried to match that requirement with the state of the art at that time. Now--and I should go back a little prior to that. Prior to that the whole thing was conceived down at Quantico by that high level study group that they had down there.

Frank: Advanced--

Fris: The Advanced Study Group or something. And this was in the--I guess the early '50's--

Frank: '50's, right.

Fris: --late '40's or early '50's.

Frank: '50's when it began.

Fris: Right. And they came up with this thing and said that this was what the Marine Corps needs, so then the people at

Headquarters Marine Corps, then, in the electronics area, and a couple of them in particular--I think I mentioned earlier Bob Cochran and Al Jones were two guys that pushed it up there, and they said yes, that we can get going in this particular area. There was also a civilian engineer, Dr. Toney, in Cochran's office that contributed a great deal to the initiation of the program. So they, then, funded, got our R&D funds to fund this study with another group of, like I say, engineers and scientists, what have you, from the civilian community that came up with this thing, and they said, "Yes, you could, in fact, build a system that would do these things."

Then the Marine Corps went ahead, and through NAVELEX--see, there's an office down at NAVELEX that does all of this stuff for the Marine Corps, and that office down at NAVELEX, then, went out and asked for bids on these programs, and I guess several people bid. I got in right after they signed the contract into Headquarters, but I know that G.E. was one that bid, Litton, probably Hughes. And once they bid on this thing and got that contract in--of course, the bid was for a test complex, two MACS centers and a TACC and a beach relay to bring us stuff from the Navy. So they, then, went ahead and signed a cost plus fixed fee contract, all R&D funds, with the Marine Corps to build that test complex.

Now, NAVELEX said that the reason they went with Litton and realizing that they didn't have much of a plant, they just started up, but they did, through the Navy, have a contract for the airborne, for ATDS, that the Navy had, so they said,

"Well, look, since they're building one for the airborne system, we want a small, lightweight system too and they could, you know, apply the same techniques and maybe even use the same equipment, and we as a result, then, would get a smaller setup," and, as I say, that's the rationale that they told me was the reason they went to Litton on this thing.

Then, in a cost plus fixed fee contract, of course, there are time delays or they've got to buy more equipment, pay engineers, what have you, so that there are always overruns, and there were a tremendous amount of overruns on this program, and there was a lot of flak coming from Headquarters Marine Corps, and deservedly so because of the control of the program. It just kept going on and on, and they keep asking for dollars, and I remember Hochmuth even had a painting that was made--I guess the artist people up there made one with an alligator on it swallowing--and it showed Gen Hochmuth with a shovel shoveling dollars down that alligator's throat, and Gen Shoup gave it to him, and it said something to the effect that that's all til later, alligator, or something like that, but--

Frank: Do you kind of--I'm sorry.

Fris: --it was, it was really taking all the R&D funds from the Marine Corps.

Frank: Well, now, this, evidently, was an expensive program. The Marine Corps notably for a long time has had not that kind

of R&D money available. What was the initial investment on this, do you remember?

Fris: I think the initial contract was--I think it was $4.9 million, $3.9 or $4--it was just under $4 or just under $5 million. I've forgotten the exact--but it was in that category and then by the time we finished, in R&D funds I think the last I remember was $37 million in R&D funds, and then, of course, when we bought the equipments, and it seems to me that that ran almost--the total was around $200 million or something like that. It was a lot of dough for them.

Frank: Over how long a period of time? Now, this was about 15 years or so more.

Fris: Well, let me see. They started that thing in 1957, and in 1967 is when it first went to Vietnam, and we were still building the equipments at that time, so it was maybe 12 or 15 years, somewhere along in there that all these monies were spent on that system.

Frank: But does it normally take that--well, how can you figure normally? Isn't that a long time for a system to be conceived and then developed?

Fris: I think 10 years is considered normal.

Frank: Ten years is considered normal.

Fris: Now, even for a radar, to get a radar developed with new techniques and what have you and get it actually tested, approved, and then start getting it into the field, it would be about 10 years.

Frank: How about aircraft, a model, how long does that take?

Fris: Well, it's close to that. I'd say six to ten years on aircraft. Of course, there, again, it's what priority is put on the thing.

Frank: What happens if you have a war? I guess it's speeded up.

Fris: Oh, yes, then there's no problem. Everything, all effort, goes that way and you can really throw them out in a hurry, but there are so many other things that get involved, the politics, the funding, and there's delays because of funding. there's delays because some people get involved in certain areas and don't want to see it go, and they'll delay it.

Frank: Well, you were at--you commanded the MACS- for four years, three and a half, actually, September of '61 to March of '65. You were under constant pressure from Headquarters, let's get on with it, let's prove it out, or--

Fris: Well, no, I really didn't have that--there was a couple of areas in Headquarters Marine Corps, where the opposite was true. They kept telling us, "We've got to get going with this thing, and so how about getting some good test results, a good report coming in?" That was the pressure from the one particular area, but all in all, like, for instance, old Bob Mitchell that was back here and General Hochmuth, they both wanted a good test on that damned thing. They said, yes, they would like to see good reports coming back, and the reports that we sent back caused them additional problems in trying to sell the continuation of the problem to back here at Headquarters--

Frank: Yes, rationale.

Fris: --but they, like I say, as far as I was concerned, those guys hung in there with us, and I don't--I can't say that there was any pressure there. They certainly would like to have rushed it up a bit, but there was just no way of doing it. We had visitors all the time out there and they, the progress was being monitored by everybody all the time, and we had all kinds of visitors from foreign countries, other services, everywhere trying to see whether or not this is the kind of equipment they wanted--

Frank: Applicability.

Fris: Yes.

Frank: Did you have to run a dog and pony show each time they came out?

Fris: Oh, yes, oh, yes. We had a special quonset hut set up just for that, for the dog and pony shows. We were set up in old quonset huts there. As a matter of fact, I used to live in one of those old quonset huts, half of one during World War II, those housing things. We were in the same area there.

Frank: Same area.

Fris: But we did, we had a dog and pony show set up all the time, and they would--we would, in most cases, be told from Headquarters Marine Corps, who was coming and--

Frank: It all came out from Headquarters?

Fris: Right, it had to be because there was so much, from all over they were coming, so we finally centralized it and it came from Headquarters.

Frank: What would you say are some of the highlights of this three and a half years?

Fris: Well, I think one of the things was that the people we had working on that system, that were in that test unit. They were

some of the most outstanding people I think I've ever run into anywhere, and I've been with the electronics industry, and I'm talking about people within industry itself. And there's a few in industry that I could rate with these guys, but these Marines were something else. I mean, boy, they really worked at that thing. They were concentrating on getting that thing to go. They weren't trying to slough off anywhere or saying that this was good or this was bad just to--for a personal gain of any kind. People like Ed Burns, Charlie Westcott, Hank Vitali, John Hedin, Jim Gillis, John Barnard, Dan Mazarotti, Tom Ashe, Charlie Dixon, George Leach, Chuck Hoffman, Milt Hefty, Glenn Jacks, Dick Hawthorne, Paul Hurd, Herb Fix, Walt McManus, Ernie Jarvis, and many others whose names I can't recall at the moment. They were really--they had the Marine Corps at heart and really worked their butts off, and I admired the hell out of them for that, every one of them. And they all--in fact, we used to sit and have a meeting and talk about this thing, and never one time do I recall any one of those Marines ever trying to say that, well, maybe we ought to say this or that in our reports to, for instance, to keep the program going. They hung in there all the way, that we're doing this for the Marine Corps, for the future and whether or not Marines can really operate and maintain it.

Now that, like I say, that was the highlight of all of it. I've never ran into a more capable, honest and loyal bunch than that group that was there. They really were just

a fantastic group of people. Now, there were some other things that--in the highlight area--like I say, some of the--in a derogatory way, like I say, we had some bad problems within the Marine Corps that I delved into before, and I call that a lowlight rather than a highlight, I guess, but the big highlight to me was when we finally got that system working, and we had some air controllers in there--in fact, some of them were enlisted--really outstanding guys. We had a couple in particular--finally retired as a master sergeant, Jones, and there was another one, Singleton--that were two outstanding enlisted controllers, and the officer controllers that we had, we had some, I guess, that were not former enlisted, but most of them were former enlisted, and you just couldn't beat them, officers like Charlie Mears, Bill Gwaltney. And to see these guys actually when we got the system working and see the--and we would run multiple intercepts, get in airplanes from the wing and what have you, running these multiple intercepts, and these guys would operate that equipment, and it was just fantastic watching those guys operate and seeing, really, that this equipment can, in fact, do what the Marine Corps wanted it to do.

Batha: Was there any particular first operation that you were out to prove the system on? You know, every--just about the development of everything always had the first operation where you really were satisfied that you were here--

Frank: Breakthrough.

Batha: --you know, you had arrived, and the operational capability of the organization and the equipment.

Fris: Well, I guess, really, the first thing that we were trying to prove was that there--well, there were a couple of them that sort of got together. One of them was could this system really automatically detect and automatically track a target through the ground return and everything else, and not come up with false targets and what have you. And, of course, that was the one thing we wanted to prove. We felt if we could prove that, then we wouldn't have much of a problem on the rest. The rest is really a simple type of a problem, and the whole thing that held us back, like I say, was that damned drum servo. We kept trying with that thing, and then once we got that in there, why, then the rest of it was trying to sort of perform the intercepts and what have you because the intercepts were automatically controlled too. The computed commands would come out on display to the controller, and he would verbally pass them on. And, also, we did that automatically for the few airplanes that had the equipment in them, we did that automatically, and then we would try to sort of hone those things to make them better. But the real big milestone to me was the automatic detection and tracking of those airplanes, and once we got that accomplished, why, then, you can see everything was going to fall in place after that.

Frank: There was no particular go, no go period?

Fris: No, they didn't give us that. We kept insisting, of course, until they got that part fixed, that one problem resolved, we could never do anything.

Frank: And it took a year to get that thing--

Fris: It took a year to get them to do anything, and like I say, and that's a year of arguing all the time with the, not only the contractor. You know, NAVELEX was supposedly running that contract and could tell the contractor to do this.

Frank: And would they--

Fris: Never would, they never would.

Frank: Abrogated their responsibility.

Fris: Yes. Like I say, it was these Marines that were in that unit that were the ones that really were the success of the whole program.

Frank: Lucky you didn't get an ulcer out of it.

Fris: No, I didn't, and I've said many times, someone comes up and says, "You might get an ulcer," and I said, "Look, if I

haven't got an ulcer up to date, I'll never have one," because--it worked out real well. Of course, from my viewpoint, again, I knew that these guys were right and what we were doing was right, so it didn't really churn inside. I had some real bad moments in arguing with some of these people as to whether or not they were really on the Marine Corps side or whether or not they were on the contractor's side, and that always--

Frank: And NAVELEX.

Fris: And NAVELEX and also at Headquarters Marine Corps.

Frank: Did it ever get down to knock down, drag out fights?

Fris: Well, they looked like a kangaroo court or something. They came out and were going to sort of hang us, but as I said earlier, Gen Kier saw through this whole thing and then Gen Kier got to Gen Greene who was at that time the Commandant, and he got it all straightened out when they put Gen Anderson in charge, then, and Gen Kier insisted. He said, "You can't run a program of that magnitude without having some man in charge at Headquarters Marine Corps, that's calling all the things, putting it all together." And that was the secret to it, and once that happened, then the thing went really well.

Frank: You really had no poppa at Headquarters at that time except General Hochmuth and--

Fris: Gen Hochmuth was there, and, of course, Gen Hochmuth had so many other things that he was involved in, and Col Bob Mitchell was up there, and Bob Mitchell had a lot of other things involved in. That was, of course, his main one, but he was involved in a lot of other things. And like Gen Kier insisted, he said, "You're talking about maybe a quarter of a billion dollars total program and you better put some one man up there that can run this whole damn thing, that pulls it all together," and we were. We were, we at the test unit were testing it to make damned sure that it did what it was s upposed to do and the Marines could, in fact, do it. The contractor, all he was looking for was--he wanted a production contract right away so he could get going, and we kept insisting that if you fix some of these things, we can tell them that it's a good system and you can get a production program going. NAVELEX wanted to keep the program going, of course, because that was a big job that they had to do and keep going there, and, so everybody was trying individually to do what they thought was right, but it wasn't working out that way, and, like I say, you need one man in charge and put him there, and he--finally--there's bound to be differences. I don't care what you do. You know, we can sit around the table here and talk something and we can probably get three different opinions, so you get the differences, but then, finally, you got to have somebody that says, "This is the way it's going to be."

Frank: Well, Earl Anderson ran interference for you in that sense?

Fris: He did. I'll tell you, and he ran the program. There was no doubt in anybody's mind then that he ran the program, and he did an outstanding job, like I say.

Frank: How long did it take him to get read into the program?

Fris: Fantastic. It didn't take him long at all. As a matter of fact, as soon as he got into the program, and I've forgotten, he must have been there maybe a couple of weeks at the most, and he called a meeting at Headquarters Marine Corps, of the different people involved, and he wanted a rundown on the thing, and Hank Vitali, then, was working in AAM at Headquarters Marine Corps, and Hank said that he was absolutely amazed how fast that Gen Anderson caught on to what was going on. He said, "He's got all of the real problems. Everybody up here briefed him and he's already found where all those damned problems are." And it wasn't long at all and he had the whole damned thing straightened out, told everybody where they were going and what they were doing. And the other thing was that some people said he was hard to work for. I didn't find him hard to work for. All you had to do was be honest with him. If he ever caught you in a lie, you were in trouble with him, and I know, he caught one Marine up there and really got on him. But if you were just

honest with him and told him this is the way it was, he didn't care how bad the story was. If that was the truth, then he would go ahead and do something to solve the problem, and he could, boy, he could see things and get around these problems faster than anyone I ever saw.

Frank: That particular meeting you were talking about, were you called from the coast to attend it?

Fris: Oh, yes, uh huh. And that's when--when I got there, as a matter of fact, Hank Vitali told me, he said, "I don't know if you know him." I said, "I met him when he had that group out there, but I've never served with him or anything else," and he said, "Well, I'm absolutely amazed at how fast he's really got the problem areas, and he's going to work on those and get them resolved," which he did.

Frank: Yes. Now, when you went to BuShips in March of '65, from MACS-3, was this a follow-on of your experience? In other words, you were bringing the experience you had at Litton and then at MACS-3 on to BuShips for the applicability of the program to the Navy?

Fris: As a matter of fact, Gen Anderson didn't like the way the contract was being run at BuShips, that particular contract, so that's why he wanted to bring me back there, and there was, I guess, quite a tussle back there on getting me there because

some people didn't want to move out the man that was in there. They, evidently, had some general officer discussions on this thing, and, as a matter of fact, before I was sent down there I had to go in and see the Chief of Staff and get a briefing from him, Gen Chapman at the time was the Chief, and I must have been in there at least 30 or 45 minutes with him on the thing, and then I had to go and see Gen Henderson who was the G4 at the time because he was involved in the thing, and then what had happened, evidently, they couldn't get--they couldn't move my predecessor out of there at the time, so I was going to be in there as his assistant. So they wondered who was going to be in charge and what have you, and I told them there wasn't any doubt in my mind who was going to be in charge. I'm junior. I'm a Marine, and I know who the senior man is in there. I'll do everything I can to sway him if I think he's going wrong, and if I can't do anything, if I have to come to Headquarters Marine Corps, for some help, I'm not going to do it without telling him first, that I don't agree with you, and that, in discussions--

Frank: You were what, a lieutenant colonel at this time?

Fris: I was--yes, I was a lieutenant colonel. I made colonel that summer. I guess I was selected for colonel and hadn't made it yet.

Frank: Hadn't made it yet.

Fris: Hadn't made it, and I made it in July that year, I think.

Frank: '65?

Fris: Right. But that was an interesting program.

Frank: Now, the guy who was the bottleneck or the problem over at BuShips was a naval officer that had to be relieved. Was it a Marine?

Fris: It was a Marine, right, a Marine colonel.

Frank: There was some question about relieving him. Who was reluctant to have him relieved, the Navy or the Marine Corps?

Fris: Well, see, I don't know, and maybe I shouldn't even get into it because it was sort of hearsay. No, it was the Marine Corps, and, like I say, I don't know how it came about or anything else, but there--I was told that, "There was a reluctance and we've had quite a battle on it, and you are going to have to see the Chief of Staff and the G-4 on the thing," which I did. Like I say, I think that they were concerned that there was going to be a real todo between he and I with me in there being his assistant and that I might pull some things that wouldn't be kosher or something, and I said, "No, there's no question in my mind. I mean, if that's where you want me to go, and he's the senior man, he's going to call the shots."

Frank: Who was this?

Fris: Frank Casserly, Col Frank Casserly. And that's the way it was.

Frank: Now, what did Gen Chapman tell you when you sat down in his office?

Fris: Well, he just went over the whole program and the problems they had and what have you.

Frank: He was well up to it, of course?

Fris: Oh, yes, he was, yes. Everybody, all the way through the Commandant, I'll tell you, on that program because, as I say, that was the first really big program where they were using Marine Corps funds, other than ammunition and stuff like that, but--

Frank: Was the first big R&D program Marine Corps ever had?

Fris: Of that magnitude, yes, uh huh.

Frank: That's why I asked you about the funding before because the Marine Corps, I think, was a long time getting involved in R&D--

Fris: Oh, yes.

Frank: --depending on the other services, so not only was proving out--not a question of proving out the program itself, but proving out the Marine Corps' ability to do its own R&D and monitor its own R&D funding and programing. Is that correct? Is that a good--

Fris: Yes, yes. I recall, as a matter of fact, when Gen Shaw--

Frank: That's Sam Shaw.

Fris: --had R&D and he even wrote a letter to the CNO--no, I guess it was to the head of R&D. He wrote it to the head of R&D, his opposite number in the CNO's office, and in there he was objecting to the fact that the funds that were given to the Marine Corps were a flat rate each time, and he just thought that that was completely wrong.

Frank: Inflexible.

Fris: Yes, no flexibility there at all, see, and he says that if we need something more than that, why, we can't even plan on the thing, and he thought that they ought to put it on a flexible--I've forgotten the tone of the letter or what have you, but it was pretty blunt.

Frank: It's like a parent giving a kid an allowance and saying, "Don't spend it all in one place."

Fris: Exactly.

Frank: You're on a string.

Fris: Exactly.

Frank: Now, I think--that's right. Sam Shaw had R&D to begin with, but Bruno Hochmuth was the first real big cheese in there. I think Sam was a BG and Hochmuth was a major general at that time?

Fris: Hochmuth was a BG because when he came in he just made BG.

Frank: Okay.

Fris: And, in fact, he told me that Gen Shoup called him in and said, "I'm going to assign you to R&D," and he said something about getting fired.

Frank: I think he may have been in personnel or something at that time.

Fris: No, I think he just came here from San Diego or somewhere --he just reported in as a BG, I believe.

Frank: Okay.

Fris: And then they gave him that job, and then later on, of course, he did make two star. Gen Hochmuth did a good job.

Frank: What about Henderson? Henderson is a very enigmatic character who has kind of been forgotten in Marine Corps annals since his retirement, but I've heard mixed comments on him. What was his role and how did he act in this all?

Fris: Well, he was in there for just a short while as far as my contact with him was concerned, and, like I say, this one meeting that I had with him, we discussed this whole thing and I guess the meeting was cut short because I told him that--he sort of alluded to there might be a problem or something, and I said, "General, I don't know what you're worried about. There's not going to be a problem. I am a Marine and I know that the senior man is in charge, and he's going to be in charge." And he said, "Well, hell, that's what I kept arguing all the time. I don't see what the hell the problem is either." So it was cut short after that, but to my knowledge that was really the only contact that I ever had with him, so I couldn't comment on him.

Frank: Well, now, Casserley was an aviator who was--

Fris: No, he was ground.

Frank: --had been grounded. He was an electronics specialist?

Fris: Well, he was a communications specialist.

Frank: Okay.

Fris: Right.

Frank: And you hadn't known him from before?

Fris: I had not known him.

Frank: And what were your relations with him once you got in there?

Fris: Well, I'm--

Frank: It worked out as you--

Fris: Well, you know, we had our disagreements and stuff on the--we kept trying to push them to get the contractor to do something, and we weren't getting any results.

Frank: He had been reluctant all this time to put any--

Fris: To put any pressure on them.

Frank: Was this, would you say, more a question of Marine Corps inexperience rather than any reluctance or inability or--

Fris: No, I think it was a personal thing.

Frank: Personal thing.

Fris: Yes. Because when I went in there, then, I know that one of the first things they--that Gen Anderson wanted was for me to go out there to the plant with that new job title and to stay there for a couple of weeks. I guess I was out there, and looking into the whole program, and then when I came back I gave Headquarters staff a briefing on the thing. I know that, oh, Col Casserly was really upset with me that day because he said, "You told them too much." Now, you know, I don't operate that way. To me every Marine deserves, so long as he's cleared--I'm not talking about sensitive type information, but on an R&D program like that, to me they all--everybody has got to have all of the word and then we solve the problems together, and you can't solve them together unless you're--

Batha: I'm not sure what you were working on with BuShips. You had been essentially involved with our MTDS system. Now, with BuShips, were you trying to incorporate Marine equipment into the MTDS system or--

Fris: Oh, no, no, no, no. The BuShips ran the Marine Corps contract on the MTDS.

Batha: Oh, I thought NAVELEX is part of BuShips, then.

Fris: Yes. See, BuShips, then, was finally phased out and there was a NAVELEX and they have ships and stuff that replaced it, so it was the old BuShips. It's the same office, but in a different hierarchy in the Navy.

Batha: I see.

Fris: And it used to be--I think that the head of BuShips and the head of--I've forgotten what the materiel command was, but the head of BuShips was appointed by Congress, actually. They appointed the man, and what they wanted to do, then, was to make each one a command under CNO. CNO had nothing to say to them because they worked for the Congress, and this was a big contention and that's when they switched it over then, and, in fact, the switch--I know that while I was there there was a big todo going and the switch was in its process at that time.

Batha: I was under the assumption that the program would be under BuAir, say, rather than BuShips.

Fris: No, no, it was under BuShips.

Frank: Now, having worked with Litton in the development and then having commanded MACS-3 in its testing, knowing what all the problems were and everything, now you were in a position at BuShips to force Litton to do the things it had to do, supposed to do contractually.

Fris: Exactly.

Frank: Okay. Now, was this like shoveling garbage against the tide or you had the power behind you to--

Fris: It put me in a different light when I'm sitting across the table from them because now I was in the contract side and the one that really held their pursestrings. Before, when I was down there at MACS-3, why, they would listen to me and what have you and tell me no, this or that, and then they would go to BuShips and tell them a different story, and so it was a bad--

Frank: So they couldn't pull the wool over your eyes. You knew the whole gang.

Fris: Oh, yes, uh huh.

Frank: By this time were they much more cooperative and responsive?

Fris: Oh, yes, they were much more--now because of me being in that position, yes. I should say, also, I guess, that

Litton had had some changes in their management, and I know I had a lot of--well, several, not a lot, several meetings--with Roy Ash who then was the president of Litton Industries on trying to resolve these problems, and every time I talked to him, he agreed that the customer is the No. 1 man and what have you, but then when it got down to the division that was doing this work, why, it sort of stopped right away. And I think the one man that came into Litton Industries that turned things around in the customers' favor, and I don't say--I shouldn't say in the customers' favor--to where the customer was really being listened to and responded to is when this guy, George Sharfenberger, came out there.

Frank: Oh, yes.

Fris: And Sharfenberger is, to me, a brilliant man. I mean, he's really a brilliant money-man also like Roy Ash is, but he has got a much, I think, better understanding of people, the individual people than, in my view, than Roy Ash did, and he, for instance, we would get into a big old battle, and we came back to Headquarters one time and Sharfenberger--in fact we flew on the same airplane, and, by the way, I always flew in the back of the airplane, they flew in the front--we're going to the same meeting--

Frank: Commercial?

Fris: Commercial, yes. They were going first class and I'm going the other way, but, anyway, there was a big to do over this thing and there was a question whether or not they were going to cancel the contract, and he brought a letter back and put it on the table, and the admiral read this letter, and, hell, it answered all our questions and that ended the meeting.

Roy Ash has come back there and sat there and argued with the admiral and actually turned around what he was going to say simply because he got put on the defensive, but I think that Sharfenberger did an awful lot for us on that particular program.

Frank: I like to deal in generalities here because I don't think too many people are familiar with this whole process. A lot of people have a conspiratorial view of industry, you know, the military industrial complex, that industry is out for the buck, come hell or high water, and that while they may be low bidder, it's a cost plus and they're going to grow fat on it. Is it your perception that these people are really concerned--I don't know if patriotic is the appropriate word, but are, you know, they feel they have a job to do, that the government needs them, that they have an item which the government should have, this type of thing?

Fris: Yes, in my view most of them are that way. Now, there are a few around in industry that don't have that, and, as a matter of fact, the reason I smiled a little bit when you said patriotism, I even asked this one guy, we're in a big todo, this

is the first part of the program when I'm out there at the plant, and I asked this one guy that was in the sales area, and we were in a big todo over getting this damned thing fixed, and he came up with something, and I said, "Well, let me just ask you a basic question. Does patriotism have anything to do with your decisions on the way you do this thing?" And he says, "Hell, no." Now, that's one guy, and he's been with a lot of companies, and he's just nothing, but the people that are really the doers in these organizations, patriotism is in there all the way. I mean, they're trying to do a good job, and it gets to the point, again, to where you're controlling a lot of people, and you pass something down, and you get one guy over here that isn't doing it the way you want it done, and it's pretty hard to ferret him out. You can have some damage done for a long time, but all in all, overall, like I say, there were outstanding people in there that are just patriotic as hell and want to put out a good system, and they feel that the best advertising is a satisfied customer; a lot of them have stated that to me and want to do that, but, again, you know, when you get big, it's pretty hard to control everybody, and that's where the thing goes.

As far as the military industrial complex, I think it was an unfortunate term that Eisenhower used, but I don't believe that he felt that it would be taken in the context that it was. The media has taken...

End Tape 1, Side 1

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Tape 1, Side 2

Frank: You were there at BuShips for a year in this function, and then, I guess, continuing on, this is six years, goes on eight years, actually, you were assigned as MTDS program coordinator, Division of Aviation, at Headquarters in September of '66, with a continuation on of this involvement. Now, I take it that you must have relieved Gen Anderson at this point?

Fris: No, it was actually Sam Dressin. Gen Anderson had moved over to R&D earlier, and Col Sam Dressin had it at that time, so then I relieved Sam Dressin.

Frank: This had been--

Fris: We switched jobs, Sam and I switched, see. Sam, again, was a ground officer, a communicator, but also a technical specialist, and the BuShips office had a lot more than just the MTDS. There were other programs that were going on there, radar, communications developments, and what have you. So they thought at that time the thing to do was to put Sam down there and put me up at the MTDS office because then we were coordinating, getting the thing ready for the overseas--

Frank: Deployment?

Fris: Yes, for the overseas deployment, so we got involved in that an awful lot.

Frank: Let me ask you a question, strictly out of left field that shows my complete lack of knowledge and technical knowhow. Was there any ground applicability to the MTDS?

Fris: Not to this MTDS that we developed. Now, the study group that said, "Yes, you can build this for the air," they also came out with a study for ground MTDS, and that was sent to Quantico for study to see whether or not they wanted to go into it, and Quantico said no, we didn't want to go into that thing. We just weren't ready for that yet.

Frank: I can see the implications that what you're doing is taking away command. If you have a ground MTDS, you've got the senior commander up here and he's directing the whole damned show.

Fris: Well, that's--in fact, that's one thing that we fought in the MTDS thing, see, we kept insisting that we don't give the TACC a control capability because that staff up there is going to take over and control the airplanes and the squadron is not going to be able to do it, and we fought that one all the way. I still believe that within the U.S. of A. right now that's one of our problems, is that people here in Washington can talk down to practically the unit commander and

run things from there, from here, and that, to me, is the biggest mistake in the world. I think that we ought to cut those command lines right back to the field commander again. And what you do is you--I can see here in Washington, of course, they're going to run the war from here on the--

Frank: Strategy.

Fris: --but you tell them what to do and then you go from there. For instance, I don't know if you talked to Carl Hoffmann at all, but when he had III MAF is when the Mayaguez incident came up--

Frank: Carl Hoffman, yes.

Fris: Carl Hoffman had the III MAF--he--Carl Hoffman told me this. He said that Schlesinger had called--was at Department of Defense at that time--he called and tried to get hold of Dick Carey who was coming back from the evacuation there in Southeast Asia, tried to get ahold of him on the carrier to see if they couldn't go over and take this Mayaguez back, and then because of communications difficulties he couldn't talk to him. So then he calls Carl Hoffman directly and tells Carl that, look, this is what we want you to do. He even told him that he wanted a 60-man boarding party--can you imagine-- from here, see, and Carl Hoffman, then, has to send his Chief of Staff down to, I guess, Laos or wherever

they stage from, went down there, and, of course, they had Air Force helicopters to run the Marines out there. I mean, it was just a thing that was set up right here in Washington; called out there, CinCPac and FMFPac were not even aware. I mean they were bypassed completely. Now, to me, like I say, a link like that ought to be cut off, chopped. They ought to go directly to CinCPac and say, "Look, we want you to take that Mayaguez. If you need any assets, come and ask us for help." And the guy goes out and does it. But when you do it from here, I still feel that that thing in the desert in Iran was the same deal, see. They're running it right from here. That's not a way to run a small unit operation, no way at all. The thing should be run right directly from there.

Frank: Well, I think that's what part of the argument, part of the criticism of the whole Vietnam war. For instance, in Lyndon Johnson's days, I can remember, well, we had a 1st Division reunion in Washington here in '67. Gen Greene was our honored guest, and he was up there after the dinner and so on and got up on the stage and he had that beeper that his aide would carry around. He went through the command center at the Pentagon who contacted Lew Walt out at his tent in Danang or wherever he was at the time to give a message to the 1st Division people gathered there in Washington. Well, this type of looking over the shoulder business--

Fris: And that's why we're going to be failures, I think, in the thing. You've got to get a commander out there and you've

got to trust that commander, and that commander has got to trust his people right on down the line. It's that faith and trust thing that I think that we've really gotten away from.

Frank: I said you were eight years for the program, but actually you were more than that. You were nine years because you went over to take over Marine Air Control Group 18 in Vietnam to field--

Fris: No, it was fielded. It was there before.

Frank: It had been there. Who had it before you had it?

Fris: Well, no--

Frank: It had been sent out before you got out there?

Fris: Yes. When it went out there, in fact, I was sent out--I spent a month out there while they were getting it installed. I had that MTDS group up here at Headquarters Marine Corps, and went out there and sort of oversaw that because they did have a lot of problems, especially in the power units and stuff like that, but which we were able to resolve. But then I came back--that was in '67--and, in fact, I was supposed--I was going to go overseas that year. I remember Gen Anderson said, "They got you on the list," and said, "I can't see that

yet." And I guess he asked me to write a letter for him to send to the Chief of Staff to--

Frank: Delay your orders?

Fris: --to delay, and I said, "General, can you ask somebody else? I don't want to write that damned letter because I want to go. I don't want to stay here and the last thing I want to do is write that letter," so he had somebody else write it or maybe even wrote it himself, I don't know, but in the end I was delayed another year. Then I went out there and took over 18, MACG-18 which had the MACS squadron. It had the air support squadrons and MATCUs in it.

Frank: I don't want to skip over the two years as MTDS program coordinator, and I really don't know the questions to ask. Perhaps you can give sort of a brief rundown of the two-year period, some of the problems and some of the highlights that occurred.

Fris: Yes, there, I guess, during that period, if I can recall, it was sort of a--the biggest problems there were in trying to field the systems, getting the systems that were coming off of the production line and getting the people trained for the particular squadrons that were going to receive the equipment. We got involved quite a bit--I think I--we discussed before where the Air Force wanted to put a system out on

the--on their Monkey Mountain site, and we got involved with JCS on that thing I guess. We offered them one of our systems and the people to do it, and they turned it down and built their own.

Frank: Built their own system?

Fris: What they did is they took a BUIC system which was a backup to Sage, backup intercept control, I think, is what BUIC stands for, and they did that and built a building out there that had to be free from electronic interference. In fact, in the cement walls and everything else they had copper screening that was built right into the thing, a terrifically expensive piece of equipment, and all it had anyway was a, just a display to show what was going on. Ours they could have had years earlier if that had taken the thing. We offered it to them. Because we had it right there two miles from them. We had all of the information from the Navy. That's what they wanted. They wanted that information down there.

And then there was a classified thing too that I guess I shouldn't say anything about, some information that was being fed into the systems, Air Force and ours, that we worked with NSA on.

Frank: In where?

Fris: With NSA, National Security Agency.

Frank: Okay.

Fris: That system that was information that was fed into our system and the Air Force system at the time, and I knew the classification was very high at that time. I don't know what it is now, so I'll just leave it at that.

Frank: Yes, uh huh. Now, when the Marine Corps and the Navy had accepted the system, a procurement order went out for how many systems, for how many packages?

Fris: Well, the first time they went out, like I say, that's where I think I mentioned they talked us into going into production. They said they were going to buy one system, but they bought the whole wad of them, and I think it was nine systems.

Frank: At a cost of how much for each system?

Fris: Well, at that time they were talking somewhere around, I think, around $8 million, but it went much higher than that when it ended up because we had a contract with them--no, it was less than that, I think, because it seemed to me that we had a contract for somewhere around $48 or $50 million, and then the DOD broke that contract. It was a fixed price contract, and they broke it, and we had to renegotiate, and it cost us probably another $10 million.

Frank: Why did DOD break it?

Fris: They kept saying that we don't want you to have that contract unless you can prove that it is a reliable system, and they had these couple of Air Force guys in there with Fubini, and these guys kept hitting him and saying that the system won't work, it won't work, it's not realiable. Well, when we tested it and proved the reliability to them, they were, in fact, shocked. But in the meantime, we told them don't cancel that contract. You can cancel it later on, but if you break that contract now we'll have to renegotiate, and we're not going to have that same fixed price. They can throw in all this other stuff, and add on, but they went ahead and did it anyway, and, sure enough, we had to renegotiate the thing and it cost us a lot more money. Now, I don't know if there was some higher level stuff that caused them to do that because Litton was going to lose some money. I don't--like I say, I have no idea on that, but they did cancel the thing.

Frank: And we all pay for it?

Fris: Yep.

Frank: Okay. You went out to Vietnam in August of '68, and MACG-18 was up on Monkey Mountain?

Fris: No, no. The Marine Air Control Squadron 7 was up on Monkey Mountain.

Frank: Oh, I see.

Fris: MACS-4, I guess it was, MACS-4 was up on Monkey Mountain, but we were down right on the airfield. We were--

Frank: At Danang?

Fris: We were at the headquarters--18 was right on the airfield at Danang and some big two-story buildings that the SeaBees, I guess, built there right on the airfield.

Frank: Now, did you find any problem with climatological effect on the equipment out there?

Fris: No, see, the thing--

Frank: Electronics, the--I know that the air had a lot of problem with the power supply, with--

Fris: Well, we solved the power supply system in the regular Marine Corps way, I guess, as far as being highly mobile and stuff, but what we did is got some generators from the SeaBees that were up there, and these were these big 60-cycle generators, and then they had a converter on it to convert it to 400-cycle which our system accepted, because our 400-cycle generators just won't hold up. They just won't hold up. They're good for a week or so, but that's it. So--and the SeaBees had contracted with

Koreans to maintain it, Koreans, not Vietnamese, to maintain it, so we didn't have any power problems on that system.

Now, the other thing--to the other question about whether or not the climatological situation had anything to do with the electronics parts, they didn't because each one of these huts had air conditioners on it, so you controlled your own environment where the system was or where the actual electronic components were, so there weren't any problems there. Now, if an air conditioner failed, you'd run into problems, but so long as the air conditioner was working, well, and then if the air conditioner wasn't working, a human being couldn't stay in there anyway. Those huts would be so damned hot, they'd just--you couldn't do anything about it. So we didn't suffer any problems that way at all.

Frank: Well, I was just thinking of the way wars have gone with all the needs for air conditioning and climate control situations.

Fris: It is. It's tough, and it's a hell of a load, I'll tell you, but--and it's going to get worse because everything we do we want to put in shelters, and then you put stuff in shelters, you've got to control the climate, especially electronics equipment. It will fail on you.

Frank: I was thinking that early on there were considerable problems in the wing with avionics because of this same thing.

Fris: Yes, the same thing, and I'll tell you, on the power problem, the Marine Corps still hasn't solved the power problem as far as I'm concerned. We had those 400-cycle generators all over the damned hillsides, but they're not working. In fact, we had a lot of them--I sent a guy that was the exec of the squadron there for a while and I brought him down to be the 4 of the group, and I sent him to Okinawa and Japan where we were supposed to have generators there being overhauled. It was really a sad story when that--nothing was done about them anywhere, nothing. They were just sitting there. Nobody did a damned thing about the generators.

Frank: Why?

Fris: I don't know.

Frank: Was it a problem, to great a problem to be overcome or lack of inertia on the part--

Fris: I really don't know. I would be unfair if I said what it was, but they just weren't doing anything with the damned things.

Frank: What was this, was it in the maintenance program?

Fris: No, it was in the Marine Corps maintenance program on Okinawa, but then back in Japan it was--there were supposed to be--

Frank: Civilian contractors?

Fris: --to contract them out to civilians, but they hadn't contracted them out. They were just sitting there, and, like I say, I don't know what the problem was, whether or not it was lack of money or lack of inertia or what. I just don't know, but it was a sad, sad program, and we weren't--the only place that we were really worried about the power, of course, was with those TPQ10's and you know, they were--those guys were going 24 hours a day on those TPQ10's. The DASCs also needed the power, but the--we effectively eliminated any problem with the MTDS, but that's not a very amphibious type arrangement that we normally go with, but it did solve that problem.

Frank: Was there an airlift capability in the MTDS as--

Fris: Yes. I mean they were all helicopter transportable shelters.

Frank: That's what--yes.

Fris: Or you could put them into C130's also. These shelters fit into C130's.

Frank: But the helicopters could just pick up the shelters and all the equipment and everything in it?

Fris: Yes, yes. We ran tests with that also. That was another thing that we tested when they first got them. Even dropped them and everything else. You know, where a guy comes down within three feet or something to drop them like they--

Frank: And that wouldn't affect them?

Fris: No, like I say, we really lucked out. We even put them on a train and did the hump test, where the train runs into another one and stuff, and we--no, they were--

Frank: Didn't affect the electronics of it at all?

Fris: No.

Frank: That's fantastic. I want to talk about the operations of the group out there, and, perhaps, Frank, you can ask more meaningful questions than I can because I haven't the vaguest idea of how it operated. Perhaps maybe that's a good point to begin with for someone who is reading this transcript to know just how did the group operate, what was the nature of your operations out there?

Fris: Well, the group had within it the Air Control Squadron. It also had the missile battery, the missile battalion.

Frank: Oh, you had a missile battalion too?

Fris: Oh, yes, we had two of those. We had two missile battalions and then while I was out there one of them was sent back to the States.

Frank: Was this the Hawk or Honest John?

Fris: Hawk.

Frank: What was the philosophy, now? I know that there was considerable discussion about where the Hawk should be and why did it finally wind up in being in the group except that it was a defense weapon? It was like--

Fris: It's an air defense weapon.

Frank: It comes under the Air Defense Command.

Fris: And MTDS is Air Defense.

Frank: And Air Defense, okay.

Fris: And for centralized control as to who was going to fire. Do you--for instance, you don't want a fighter aircraft after somebody the missiles are shooting at. I mean, you can shoot down your own people that way, so what you do, you have to have a coordinated defense, and you have lines there to where if an enemy is coming in, the friendly fighters will

not attack, or they'll break off the attack when they hit that line because from there on, why, the missile defenses are going to take over. So, it makes good sense to have it centrally controlled like that in an area, and we did have it controlled there that way and electronically controlled, and, in fact, we had a live missile shoot-out there off of Hai Van Pass. We had one battery up there and we did the firing up there, and what we would do is we would trade crews to make sure that every crew got a chance to fire these things at drones, and it was controlled from the Monkey Mountain site. In fact, a missile man controlled the thing from the MTDS unit and controlled the firing over on Hai Van Pass.

Frank: Now--yes, go ahead, Frank.

Batha: Well, I was going to at some point here--we need to talk about where the Air Force came in, especially with the air defense because even when the missiles came in which was well ahead of anything else in the Marine Corps Air Control System, really, they came in, I think in '65 or so with a LAAM battery--

Fris: Yes.

Batha: --and they came under, supposedly the control resided with the Marine Corps, but the coordination was the Air Force's,

and the Air Force, actually, told them whether to hold fast or not. And I'm interested to see the relationship, particularly your group had, between 1st MAW, and Seventh Air Force, whoever they had designated as their coordinating agency.

Fris: Uh huh. On the air defense portion we never had a problem that way. We agree with the Air Force on the air defense portion, that you've got to have one man in charge for the whole thing. Now, we were sort of subservient to them, and we were given the sector responsibility and what have you, so we had no problem that way with the Air Force. Now with the missile battalion, they wanted to say that they were in charge of the missile people, but they really had no link to them like we did, an automatic link where we could control them, so they did concede that, yes, the control would be from there, but don't you ever forget that the Air Force is in charge of air defense here, and we told them, we don't have any problem with that because you can't have two organizations going in different directions as far as air defense and airplanes can move across lines of boundaries and stuff, so you've got to have one coordinator to do that.

The big problem that we had with the Air Force was operational control of the airplanes. That's where the big hassle came.

Frank: Single management.

Fris: Single management, and we kept insisting, no, no way would you do that.

Batha: But, for example, in I Corps at the time you were there III MAF had control of I Corps, and his 1st MAW CG was his air deputy, so to speak, and in my--my question is as the CO of the group that was responsible for air defense, how did you work with both the CG of the 1st MAW and the Air Force? Did you have a split personality or did you do all your work through the Air Force people and just report what you were doing to the 1st MAW? How did that work?

Fris: No, I worked directly for the 1st MAW as far as that was concerned, and Gen Quilter was the CG at that time, and Gen Quilter agreed that on that air defense thing that they will be in charge, we won't argue that point with them, but any time that we got an argument about control of those airplanes, well, I would argue to my dying day against the Air Force on that one, and I was supporting Gen Quilter at the time all the way. Another area where there was a little bit of confusion as to whether it's single management or not--I don't call it single management--and that is around the airfield, controlling the airplane. For instance, the MATCU would, after takeoff, pass them over to us, and we would take them on out. Well, we were able to work out with the Air Force, yes, you handle those Marine airplanes that come in, and, in fact, a lot of times they told us to go

ahead and handle the Air Force ones too because we had a better control capability than they did, and they saw it, and as long as it wasn't advertised, they didn't give a damn. But as soon as you advertised that the Marines were doing this rather than the Air Force, why, they'd catch hell from upstairs and--

Batha: See, that's the problem we face now is when we go back to document where we've supported the Air Force via, you know, our normal relation--our normal chain of command--and we supported them, we know what we did, but it's hard to see it from their side. They don't show that, yes, we could use some Marine Corps' structure. We could assign them tasks to support us, but they retain their command and control structure, and that's what we're trying to--we just had last week. We spent almost a whole week going through different examples of different operations trying to see where, in fact, the Marine Corps supported the Air Force and the Army or the ARVNs or whoever using our normal command relation, command structure, and many times it's difficult to--

Fris: No, I find--my experience has been that if you let those guys in the field do it, you stay out of it up here and let the guys in the field do it. They'll solve the problem, and there's no Marine Corps commander who is going to give up his aviation assets to direct control by another service. There's just no way he can do that, and in my mind, again, there's

no way that the Air Force needs that. Again, you've got certain responsibilities and the Marine Corps has got these airplanes for their own purposes. That's what they require to support their ground units, and I think the Air Force ought to stay the hell out of there, out of trying to control those airplanes and say no, we want to take these over to this Army unit. Well, we've also always said that when the MACV commander would come out and declare an emergency and said this, you got to go all out for this one, we would divert our assets to go and help them out. But not on a normal basis. Normally we're going to plan our operations because we do this day in and day out throughout the year in peacetime. We train with those airplanes and those ground people. That is one combined fighting unit and we want it to stay that way, and I think it's a valid argument. I think it will hold forever. I don't see how you could ever give that up.

Frank: I'm sorry. Frank, you--

Batha: No, I didn't want--I just wanted--when we got into the discussion on the Marine Air Control Group I wanted to see if there were any sort of unusual routes of administration or anything else.

Fris: No, we had no--for instance, before we got set up out there and we were trying to find that site--in fact, I think I made three trips out there, one to find the site and then two

after that where they had meetings down in Saigon, and I went down to represent Headquarters Marine Corps on the thing, and it was always that single management thing was in the Air Force's mind. They didn't want us to even get set up on that hill site. They were really objecting to it, for us going up there, but it was always that same old deal. It came back to that damned single management thing, and MTDS, it had nothing to do with single management per se. I mean, they're talking about operational control of airplanes and all the MTDS is is an air defense system and an air control system on telling the aircraft where to go, but they don't, hell, that MACS squadron doesn't say anything about where those airplanes are going to go. That's all done at the G-3 at Headquarters, and, of course, that's what MACV wanted. MACV wanted to turn all of our assets over to them and let them say where they're going to go. It'll never sell, never sell.

And, again, to me the Marine Corps is programmed for them. They have trained for them. They have done this all the time, and the Air Force, to me, then should go...if they need more airplanes to support the Army, they ought to be doing that now, is getting those airplanes, whatever their need is, to support the Army. If they need more of them, then go get the damned things or go fight for them anyway. I've never seen anything where they've been trying to get more airplanes to support the Army and they've been turned down. Like I say, they're real basic arguments, as far as I see it, and I don't think they have an argument.

Frank: On that question of the LAAM battalions and the Hawk batteries, I don't know if this is phrased correctly. Were they cost effective? I can conceive of a Marine becoming a missile man and doing a four-year tour, not flying a single Hawk during that four years. It seems to me I remember when I was down at Camp Lejeune, the firing of an Honest John out at Onslow Beach was a major event because they're too damned expensive to spend any time in practice firing, and I think there was some question, doctrinal questions, about the role of the LAAM battalions of the Marine Corps, where they belonged and who was to control them, and whether, in fact, the Marine Corps needed them. Is this correct?

Fris: Oh, yes, yes. There have been those contentions going along all the time, and I--you really have a problem like out there there's no air coming in against you. Now, I guess until we fight a war to where we have air attacks coming against us, the LAAM battalion people are going to be in trouble always as to whether or not we need them. They have a hell of a morale problem. To keep those guys sitting out there 24 hours a day and not ever firing but maybe once a year when they fire, just get a missile shoot going, it's a horrible morale problem in trying to keep those guys happy. Really, the young commander has really got to be fighting all the time to try to get something to keep those guys busy and to keep them going.

I at one time thought that you could, in fact, put the missile battalion or the missile units--and eliminate the

battalion--but put the missile units in a MACS squadron. But there, again, that's going to make a real big outfit. I think that there are certain people that could control the whole thing that way. There are others, I guess, that would have problems with it. I don't see anything wrong with putting them in a MACS unit, the missile batteries, because it is, the same mission is being performed. It's just a little--it's a different weapon and it does have to be coordinated. It has to be coordinated from that one place, so why not put all of them under that one control squadron commander? And, like I say, I have a hard time arguing against that except for the size and the spread out of the thing, but then, hell, we've done a lot of other things that way too, again, where you give the guy that--you got a missile battery out there on that place and you trust that guy to do the job, and that's it, and he's trained for it and knows what to do and goes ahead and does it.

I do think that one of the things that that would solve is, again, that human element to where the missile people feel like they're sort of out on the side and the MACS people are getting all of the attention and what have you. This would sort of bring them together in one family and would help with the morale problem, and to me morale is all important. There's just no way you can ignore that. Functionally, I think that it would work just as well, functionally, to have them under the MACS squadron rather than having a separate missile battalion, headquarters and the whole thing. The

supply thing is an awfully big one because the tail of that missile battalion is a big supply tail, and they've got an awful lot of stuff also in addition to the MACS squadron, so the supply officer that would be assigned there-in fact, I would weight it pretty heavy in the supply area because it would be a terrific job to do that.

But, like I say, if I were going to move the missle battalion or do anything with the missile battalion, I would eliminate the missile battalion headquarters and put them in a control squadron. That's what I would do.

Frank: I was thinking, you know, the rationale for the LAAM battalion being deployed out in Vietnam was an estimate of enemy capabilities to mount an air attack on our positions, but I'm sure early on it was--it must have been determined that they just weren't going to do it. I'm thinking in terms of Korean days when I was order of battle officer for the division. No matter what, come hell or high water, we gave the CCF, the Chinese, a capability of sending Katyushas, employing Katyushas, against our forces, and I don't think we ever found out where the Katyushas were, if they, in fact, had them, and also IL28's, and no indication, and they kept grinding this in and grinding it in, and it was a false assumption. I mean, at one point you made a decision that no, they don't have the 28's and are not going to employ them, that we've got air control and that the Katyushas, that they--it would be a surprise if they do use them, but we--it's

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a false assumption again. So there must have been some time in Vietnam when they decided or should have decided that, well, they may have the capability, but we don't see it, and I don't think it's going to happen at which point send the LAAMs home.

Fris: Well, there again, I guess, like you say, it's the estimates, and I'm sure that some people are trying to cover their butts, so to speak, and they feel that there is a possibility regardless of how remote it is. I would have trouble...of course, it's easy to look back, but I would have trouble saying no to somebody saying let's send all the missile battalions home while I was out there. I would have trouble saying no. I'd say, hell, yes, because there was no air threat, no air threat whatsoever, and I really felt for those guys sitting on those goddamned hillsides with that equipment and waiting for something to happen. And, you know, it doesn't take too long to wait to where you get bored as hell.

Frank: What would they have done back in the States? They'd still be training.

Fris: Oh, yes, I mean you're still training.

Frank: Right.

Fris: But--

Frank: Well, I think we've belabored that matter. Anything outstanding, any highlights from your Vietnam tour?

Fris: Well, I think there, again, in looking toward the future of the Marine Corps, I think that one of the things that we've got to do something about is that direct air support center. It was really as crude an operation as there ever was.

Frank: Even at this late date? DASC goes back to Korea days.

Fris: Yes, but it was a very crude operation, and communications was a big problem on that damned DASC, and I--trying to talk to the airplanes, the helicopters, and the ground people who were making requests, and we had a big todo out there, to me a real big problem. It was when Gen Davis was out there, and he had the 3d Division up north, and he was unhappy as hell because he couldn't get the helicopter support that he wanted. And Gen Quilter was trying to solve the problem, and, of course, he would catch hell from Gen Cushman or Nickerson each time because things weren't just going right. He couldn't get the helicopters when he wanted them. They had problems as far as getting them on emergency. The 1st Wing would say, "We'll give them to you when you've got an emergency, but only then," and then they would have to call down from up north on telephones that were just horrible and try to justify an emergency to the Wing G-3 so that they could send a helicopter out. They couldn't

communicate. They couldn't get their requests in, so Gen Quilter had to get together, and he finally decided that he ought to send me up there to start at the furthest northwest outpost and come back and see what kind of communications problems they got or what really are the problems that exist up there, and so I did. I went on up there, and I think it was Fire Support Base Greene that we went to. They had a company on it, the first one, and they could just hardly communicate, but they'd communicate back to the battalion headquarters, and the battalion was on Fire Support Base Neville, I believe, and, in fact, the guy just got picked up for general, he was a battalion commander at that time. He had OCS, just had OCS and got picked up. I can picture him, but anyway, he was really upset. I asked him what the problem was. He said, "The problem is I can't get any Marine helicopters." He said, "I can see Army helicopters flying around and I'll get them on the radio and they'll come up and do anything we want, but I can't do it with the Marines at all. The Marines just aren't supporting us."

Like I say, I moved on back all the way to the headquarters, and then I find out that they're really upset too about they not only can't they get them, but when they've got an emergency that they have declared, they have to justify this down to the wings, so--and they weren't using their--the radio jeeps at all. They said they couldn't make them work, so they weren't using those for the HF communications which should work real good up there.

So, anyway, I came back then and I reported to Gen Quilter and his staff, and my recommendation was, first of all, I said "I understand that there are not enough helicopters to give Gen Davis all the helicopter support that he wants. You make out a schedule, and that's it. That's the only airplanes that you got available to you, but when they call for an emergency I think it's wrong to ask them to justify over a phone down here. I think that up there is sufficient. He declares an emergency and it goes that way." And I talked to our people and they said, "Well, the only problem is that if you do that, if you let them do it, they'll be hauling ice cream and everything else." And I said, "Well, that's their problem. I'm sure that if your pilots came back and said, 'look, they didn't have an emergency,' and let Gen Quilter get with Gen Davis, it will get straightened out, but trust them to do it," and I said, "You know an emergency is a different state of mind for every person. To me a thing is an emergency when maybe it isn't for you or vice versa." And I said, "We aren't out there on those damned hillsides with these guys, and we don't really know what the hell is going on out there, and if that guy declares an emergency, I say we ought to say go. Don't call down here to say whether or not you ought to do it. You got helicopters up there and go ahead and do it that way." But I lost the argument.

Frank: Was one of the problems the fact that Ray Davis did not have a senior enough air officer on his staff who could call back to the wing?

Fris: Well, I think--

Frank: He mentioned that was one of the problems.

Fris: Yes, he mentioned that was the problem, but to me I say why even worry about calling back to the wing? That's my question. Why not--they got the helicopters up there and trust that group up there to say when they have an emergency, then they decide whether or not it goes.

Frank: He did have a group of helicopters?

Fris: Well, they were up there at Phu Bai and on up at--

Batha: Quang-tri.

Fris: Huh?

Frank: Quang-tri.

Fris: Yes, Quang-tri. They had them up there, but he couldn't authorize their use without--

Frank: Having to go back to the wing and the wing would then authorize the squadrons up there to--

Fris: Yes. If they'd justify it, and sometimes they'd say no, that's not an emergency, and they wouldn't justify it. To me,

I can't think of any worse situation to put a division in than that. To me, I say that when you call in an emergency--you're out there in the field--goddamnit, you send a helicopter out there. Now, if it turns out that it wasn't an emergency and some guy is pulling something, why, then you get him by the stacking swivel and straighten him out, but you don't put in an impossible situation like they had.

So, finally, what happened, and I think it was Gen Quilter then that sent--was it Hank Hise or William Gentry?

Frank: I think it was Hise.

Fris: Yes, Hise up there, and then--

Frank: Right, as his deputy.

Fris: Right, so he could make decisions up there for them, and then when Thrash came in in July just before I left and then Thrash, I think, had Smoke Spanjer up there--

Frank: Uh huh.

Batha: Homer Hill was up there.

Frank: Homer Hill.

Fris: Homer Hill, that's right. Homer Hill was up there. That's who it was. Homer Hill was up there, and Hise stayed down, so

Homer Hill was up there trying to solve the problem too, and did a hell of a lot for them because I remember when he left --they gave a going-away dinner for him--and all of the ground generals were there and they had nothing but praise for him.

Frank: Yes. I think there was a problem also with Quilter. There was a personality problem, may have been,

Fris: There may have been. I don't know. I didn't see that one at all. I really believe it was Quilter's staff, not Quilter, but, I mean, that's just an observation of mine.

Frank: But I know when Gay Thrash, it seems to me in my memory, that when Gay Thrash came up that the problems resolved, and then of course it may have been the way he operated his staff and told them to be more responsive.

Fris: Right. And, like I say, I--another thing that they had going, I guess that III MAF then set up a--I guess there was a lot of hash that came all the way back here, and they set up a study, and who was the--

Frank: Armstrong, Alan Armstrong.

Fris: No, no. This was before that board. Youngdale.

Frank: Youngdale.

Fris: It was Youngdale and Homer Dan Hill and--

Frank: Right.

Fris: --a couple others. There were, I think, four general officers on that thing, and I remember I sat there and talked to them. They talked to me about that trip that I had made up north and what I thought the problems were, and I don't know whatever came of that, but there was that report.

Frank: Well, that whole period of time was very interesting because we were getting, I recall,'66, '68, '69, a number of interviews field interviews, coming back or the debriefs at FMFPac, and the air officers, the helicopter officers, would say that the ground people didn't understand their problems and the ground people said that the helicopters were not responsive to their problems, and I think that you had the Youngdale study out there which finally led back here to the--and I guess it got pretty rough back here in the Armstrong Boards.

Fris: Maybe so, maybe so. I don't--

Frank: You didn't recall that?

Fris: No, I didn't get involved in that one, but I did get involved in that one out there, and, as I say, I had to side

with the ground on that thing. I thought that we were not supporting them helicopter-wise, and my big contention was the fact that they would not trust them up there to authorize the helicopter to go when they called an emergency, and, like I say, I just think that is absolutely wrong.

Batha: You know, I'm getting confused because we had a standard frag every day for the real emergencies were the MEDEVACs, and we had a couple of others where we kept helicopter forces in forward positions, and the DASC came to us directly and you're saying that the wing wasn't giving the DASC those missions, because we were constantly executing emergency type of missions.

Fris: You had a certain number that were on the frag, but to deviate from that frag, you had to get permission from the 1st Wing G-3.

Batha: Well, the DASC always, though, could break it, so you're saying the breakdown was the wing wasn't accepting additional requirements and sending them back to the DASC for--

Fris: Right. They would not authorize--

Batha: --breaking loose the assets.

Fris: Now, at times they would. They would be convinced, okay, it's an emergency, so go ahead and take it, but there were

other times when they didn't. Now, to me, while you're discussing all of this the emergency can have been very well abated, and probably was in a lot of cases, and probably to the detriment of those ground troops, and I say the system should have been to where you at the DASC up there should have been able to...when they come in with an emergency, I think that the DASC people should say, if we got an emergency here we want an airplane. If there's an airplane available, you send the damned thing.

Batha: The other point is, your mentioning land lines and, of course, you know, the high freq was just perfect for this kind of an operation as far as from battalion on up the chain. I know that, you know, the companies didn't have them, but there at Fox Mikes should have been good enough to get--in other words, to get the request moving, it seems hard for me to se that the comm was as bad a problem as you thought it was when you checked it.

Fris: Well, the real bad comm problem was air to ground; from everything that I observed, it was from air to ground. They couldn't get ahold of the helicopters, the DASC couldn't, or get hold of the airplanes.

Batha: Oh, okay. In other words, it wasn't the requesting circuits.

Fris: Not now. Now, the requesting thing was, so--but there was a problem there in that they used the Fox Mike for everything, and we were trying to get them to use this other. They said that, for instance, some of these fire support bases were out here and they couldn't talk to somebody on Fox Mike, so we said, "Well, that's why you got that high frequency radio jeep, and go ahead and use that." Now, they weren't using those at all, and they would just give up if they couldn't get the Fox Mike.

Frank: Why weren't they using the radio jeeps?

Fris: They weren't even maintained.

Frank: Oh.

Batha: Well, a lot of the positions, they couldn't have gotten jeeps where they were at anyway. They were up in mountains and things like that, but--

Fris: Well, I actually went to see some of the jeeps that the guys were driving around, and I said, you know, can you use that radio? No, no, this doesn't even work.

End Tape 1, Side 2

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Tape 2, Side 1

Fris: . . . really got to be improved. That helicopter has got to be able to be able to talk to--

Batha: It's even worse now.

Fris: Is that right?

Batha: It's worse now because now our defensive tactic is, of course, low-level flight--

Fris: Oh, yes, yes.

Batha: --and with low-level flight you get more than two or three clicks away from the DASC you can't talk to them.

Fris: Yes.

Batha: Until you get--you know, some sort of radios, and, of course, when HF is either line of sight or it takes 22 miles to talk to somebody, to get that bounce off so HF isn't the answer necessarily either for that kind of a problem, so we have worse problems now with the DASC controlling helicopters than before because before they were flying optimum, 1,800, 2,000 feet altitudes right in the area.

Fris: And it might be, you know, an airborne relay, just put a helicopter up there with a relay to get back and forth because you've got to communicate or you really can't function as a DASC. You've got to know what's going on.

Batha: Well, rather than a helicopter, I would think that what the Navy does, you know, using E2's or something would be the way to go.

Fris: Yes, anything that way.

Frank: They never did get that solved, though? Well, they did ameliorate it, the situation of the helicopters when Homer Dan Hill...

Fris: Well, Homer Dan ameliorated it quite a bit, and then my understanding, of course, I had already left, but that it all solved itself real well when Thrash got there because Thrash evidently laid down the law on the way it would be done, and he had, I think it was Smoke Spanjer up there, was his man up there, and Smoke is a very receptive guy, and I'm sure that it worked out real well with the--

Frank: Well, this accusation that if you had hands off control, allowed them to control their own helicopters up there, were there many instances where they'd use them for ice cream runs and so on?

Fris: Not to my knowledge. Now, you can hearsay, you know, you can do a lot of things, but to me, to me a commander up there might want to use it for an ice cream run. If he's had those guys in battle, for instance, for many days and nights over and he wants to give them a little bit of a rest and give them a little good thing, it might be a good idea to haul ice cream in there by helicopter. I don't know.

Batha: We flew in a birthday cake on the birthday ball in 300 foot ceiling weather up there, and we wanted it, we thought we were doing something that was important.

Fris: It's quite a morale thing.

Frank: Well, there was another--there was another thing, I think, that there was a bone of contention on the control of helicopters, and that was that the helicopter or the squadron commander would make the decision that the ceiling was too low, that weather conditions would make--and, of course, that was his responsibility, I suppose, but then, on the other hand, there may have been occasions when the situation required, no matter what the restraints were, that you had to do your best, and there was some accusations not that, well, I think some accusations that the squadron commanders were not fully receptive to the situation, were not willing to take the risk.

Fris: Well, in fact, this battalion commander, Joe that had OCS and just made general, Joe Hopkins.

Frank: I don't know.

Fris: Well, anyway, he told me there, he said that, "I've called in many times and they say, 'No, the weather is too bad,' but the Army is up there flying and they'll come up and help me out." Now, like I say, that's what he said. I did hear that there were some problems. They evidently had an accident out that or something and there were some restrictions put on the conditions under which helicopters could take off, and that did cause some problems because there, again, I think a responsible person has got to weigh as to whether or not that helicopter is going to take a little bit of a chance because these guys are up there in really dire straits, so are you going to go ahead and do this. And it's a judgement factor, and you can sit around and quibble all the time about whether or not the guy is right in doing that or not because you're not there at the right time and you're not making that--

Batha: The two factors that you have to remember is No. 1, the Army based in different locations, so very conceivably they could have been on the other side of the weather, so--

Fris: Could have been.

Batha: --so that happens many times where they can be operating, but they got there in the first place. The other thing is the difference in structure. Literally, a man could die on the field and the Marine Corps would be money ahead by not launching a helicopter under certain conditions because that helicopter would be available the next day and the day and the day after that. In other words, our assets were so restricted and so limited that there would be more lives saved by not launching a crew to go. Now, I must say this, in the whole time I was in Vietnam, and I was a helicopter escort pilot so I saw all these operations, we never once turned down a mission that we didn't at least try--

Fris: And I don't know of any. Like I say, mine is strictly hearsay. I don't know of any one mission.

Frank: Well, I think you're getting to--as I hear it, there were two problems. One is a matter of doctrine, the control, what is the proper role of the helicopters and control? Is it a supporting arm, and if so, how much say should the ground commander have, and secondly, the amount of helicopter assets the Marine Corps has. You know, you look at the Army, the AirCav Mobile Division and they've got helicopters up the ying yang. Every company commander has one parked up in front of his hooch and so on. That's an exaggeration, perhaps, but maybe not.

Fris: It wasn't out there.

Batha: That's part of their table of equipment, though. They rate those. Those are organic to those units.

Frank: But if that's the case, and I know it's a very, as I've been told, it's a very expensive type of situation, and I think when discussing this with Gen Davis, you know, he recognized it, but he--it was his strong feeling that we have got to have--we've got to have more helicopters. We've got to have them more easily available to the ground commanders, and it's almost a ground commander's weapon like the mortars were in World War II for the company commander or the machine guns were. It's his artillery. It's his direct support weapon type thing.

Fris: Well, nobody knows better than he what a shortage of helicopters will do to you, too, because he got that story every day that they didn't have enough helicopters, and he was in a tough damned situation up there.

Frank: Yeah, especially in Dewey Canyon, Gen Barrow's 9th Marines.

Fris: Yes, I've forgotten the name.

Frank: Well, whatever.

Batha: Dewey Canyon.

Frank: That's right. Which certainly needed the optimum helicopter support.

Batha: Well, they got them, and that was the perfect example.

Frank: And that's why the operation was as successful as it was.

Fris: Yes, they need them.

Frank: Anything else during this tour that--that was a very interesting highlight and a very important one, I think, for the record.

Fris: Now, the only other one, I guess, is the TPQ10 support that was given, and I think we had three of them out there or something. I think it was three units, and that gets an awful lot of attention because they do an awful lot of bombing at night, you know, keep things down and what have you. They're not all that accurate, but they're fairly accurate. You know, you can get in a particular area with the thing, and in that one there was--I don't--I couldn't--I never got into the ground side of the thing as to whether that much bomb dropping and everything was really required. Again, I just trusted the fact that they said, yes, that's what they needed. They needed these bombs dropped at that time and in those numbers, but there

was a hell of a lot of activity with that thing. All night long these guys would be working, the guys flying the aircraft and dropping bombs all night long out there and not knowing, really what the results were or anything.

I do think that there's one other area that ought to be mentioned, and that's in our photo area. We had the photo capability out there.

Frank: The VMCJ-1?

Fris: And they were flying all the time, and Gen Quilter would keep saying all the time, "I don't see any photographs of the results of our bombing or the ground, what's going on. I don't understand. Where the hell do they go?" I don't think anybody ever figured out where the hell they went, but at one point somebody went aboard a carrier--it might have been Smoke Spanjer or somebody--and came back and had all these photographs that the Navy had taken ashore, great photographs, and Gen Quilter sat there at a staff meeting again and he said, "I don't understand it. Why can't I get photographs like this that show results of our air activity?" And I don't know that he ever got them, and I could never see them. I don't know what the hell they did.

I tell you the other one you ought to get to on the VMCJ-1 is Bill-oh, Christ, again, a retired brigadier general or major general, down in Mobile, Alabama, Bill--but he had the--but he's down in Mobile, Alabama, but he was CO of the

VMCJ out there, and he would be a real good one to--in fact, he was aviator of the year when he had VMCJ out there.

Frank: Okay. Well, I'll look at this retired list and--

Fris: Fleming, Bill Fleming.

Frank: Oh, sure.

Batha: I didn't know that he retired yet. I didn't realize he had retired.

Fris: Oh, yes, he retired, and he had the VMCJ, and he'd be a good one for you to talk to, Ben, I think, on that.

Frank: Okay. Yes, he's down in Mobile.

Fris: But there is another area where Marine aviation, VMCJ in particular on the ECM portion. These guys kept ECM and tactical aviation--there wasn't any in the Air Force. When we went into Vietnam the only things we had were those F3D's.

Batha: Yes, the F-10's.

Fris: Yes, that the Marine Corps had. And those were done with a guy at Navair, BuAir, BuWeps, at that time, would get this equipment, and he had a straight line contact with the

guys down at Cherry Point and VMCJ, and he's get this equipment and he'd take it down there and they'd test it, see that it worked, and a lot of times they made it work, and that's how we kept the thing going. He, this guy in this job in BuWeps had a fund and he would, you know, keep this thing going. He was keeping his job going, and he would just, on an informal basis, get this stuff, get it down there, and as a result, we had a capability that we didn't have in the U.S. forces, tactical. Now, the SAC, of course, always had a capability, but we had no tactical thing. The Air Force didn't.

Frank: We've come to--it's 25 of 12:00. I can keep on going if you'd like.

Fris: However you want to do it, Ben.

Frank: Yes. You were selected, I take it, for promotion to general up there.

Fris: In fact, I was on my way back. I guess. I left--

Frank: July of '69. It must have been you left, so it must have been July of '69 when you were selected because--

Fris: It must have been. Yes, it was because when--I got back the day they landed on the moon, and then a couple of days later I started getting phone calls and everything from everybody, and it was embarrassing, because I hadn't been notified or anything.

Frank: You were on leave where, out on the West Coast?

Fris: No, here in Vienna. The family stayed right here when I went--

Frank: You hadn't reported to Headquarters, you hadn't reported in?

Fris: No, I was supposed to report the latter part of August, I guess, but I started getting all these phone calls and everything, and at the time I guess President Nixon had gone out to meet the guys coming back from the moon, and so he couldn't sign the thing and nobody can say anything, but I finally got the word from a couple members of the Board which made it pretty official. But like I say, it was embarrassing as hell and I didn't, had no official notice or anything else. So it was in July of '79, I guess, and then I got assigned--when I reported in, then, Gen Chapman was the Commandant and assigned me as IG. As a matter of fact, I went immediately down to Cherry Point because they were having an inspection down there and Larry Snowden was acting, I guess, down there.

Frank: IG?

Fris: As IG, uh huh, while I was there.

Frank: Yes, you reported in and became IG the 23rd of August of '69.

Fris: '69, right, and then I held that for a year, and which, by the way, was a real interesting tour. You know, I know what a pain in the butt an IG inspection is.

Frank: For a commander is, yes.

Fris: I know it's a real pain in the butt and everything, and--but to go around to all these places that the Marine Corps had and see what goes on and everything was very interesting, and the different detachments and what have you. And that's when I first really got acquainted with the Marine Corps Security Guard at the embassies, and I was really thoroughly impressed, I'll tell you, with the way those guys handled themselves. We had a staff sergeant in charge, for instance, up in Iceland, five guys, a staff sergeant in charge, and all the respect in the world, you know. It's just the way they handle themselves and everything.

Frank: Would you make this stop? Would you make the trip to Iceland?

Fris: Yes, uh huh. I went to Newfoundland and Iceland and--see like in Newfoundland they had a Marine barracks there and so we had to inspect the Marines that were there and then the Marines up in Iceland, same deal. Then we went to Europe and inspected the barracks there and down into Europe and Lebanon and North Africa. What's that...?

Frank: Morocco?

Fris: Morocco.

Frank: Port Lyautey.

Fris: Right and then back up to Spain at the--what's that--

Frank: Rota?

Fris: Rota, Spain, yes, and then back on here, and that's one tour that they make every year, and that's why I say that one year is a real good tour that I wouldn't want to go through the second year because you repeat a lot of it. You don't on the east and west coast commands, but most of it you repeat.

Frank: You hit the major commands too?

Fris: Yes, like we went out to Okinawa and hit those commands there and then back in Hawaii, hit them there. We didn't go to El Toro because it seems to me they take the east coast one year and the west coast the next, so I was down at Camp Lejeune. I had a couple investigations that you're assigned by the Chief of Staff that are also very interesting, and I learned a lot from those also. One was out in Morocco, in Rabat. Evidently a couple of Marine had disarmed a policeman

there in Rabat and he kept the pistol. If he hadn't kept the pistol they'd have been okay, but it was a big to do, messages from the--

Frank: King of Morocco?

Fris: No, no.

Batha: Embassy.

Fris: Embassy, and running the whole thing down and getting it sent to everybody. And then the other one was--another was an--let's see. Well, I guess I went through that, though, didn't I, with the CO down at Puerto Rico with the barracks?

Frank: No, I don't think so.

Fris: Yes. There was a lawyer down there, the chief lawyer, I guess, for the admiral had called the legal guy here who was his buddy, I guess, at Headquarters. In fact, we were down at Parris Island, I guess, at the time on an inspection and I got a call from the Chief and he said, "You've got to go to Puerto Rico and inspect that," and he told me what this guy related and said that they had four guys in the brig at that time serving sentence of a court martial, and he had 14 others awaiting court martial. The barracks was 110 people, and these were selected people too, that were down there. They had to

be Category B type because of the clearance there. So they were having a typhoon--they don't call them typhoons here.

Batha: Hurricanes.

Fris: Hurricanes down in that area and we couldn't get in then, so I went down the next day, but I took the Sergeant Major with me because I knew that he could find out a hell of a lot more than I could. They're not going to be open with me, but he could scout around and find them. And it was a bad situation, really. The morale down there was terrible, and the guy--again, there's this trust and faith thing. He wouldn't trust anybody with anything, and he--nobody in that barracks, 110 man barracks, could do anything with any man, could give an order. They had to get it directly from him, and of those 110 there were about 20 of them were out at a remote site with the Navy listening stations.

Batha: Ponce.

Fris: And these were really, really high caliber people. The Sergeant Major, he wouldn't even let the Sergeant Major go out there to talk to those people. The only way the Sergeant Major could go out there is if he accompanied the CO and then they could talk to them, so--and, like I say, everything that he did was that way. He, for instance, even the volleyball team that they had, he had to coach the volleyball team, he had to coach the basketball team, anything in the world.

Frank: What was he, paranoid?

Fris: He thought he was doing the right thing, I will say that. He was evidently a hell of a Marine in battle, but he just lost it all, I guess. So, because of his past record, I sat and talked to him before I left there, and in fact when I got off the airplane and he met me, I said, "Do you know why I'm here?" And he said, "No," and I said, "I'm here to determine whether or not you're being relieved. I don't want you misunderstanding a damned thing." And I told him this lawyer had called, and it surprised him, I guess, really upset him that the lawyer had called in there, so I told him what I thought, three things that he had to do. I said, "I'm going to recommend to the Commandant that you be held on until the 1st of June to get this thing straightened out, and then I'm going to recommend another inspection, and," I said, "if I come here and those things aren't done, then I'm going to have to recommend you be relieved, but I don't know that I'll be it." So he said okay, he would straighten it out. I went back there and the same thing prevailed again, exactly the same thing. He didn't do one thing, so I went in and sat with him in his office and told him, and he said, "Well," you know, that these things weren't done, and he said, "Well, I figure in about three more months I can get those done," and I said, "No. As far as I'm concerned, I'm recommending that you be relieved immediately. You've had your chance. I told you when I left"--

Frank: What was he, a colonel?

Fris: Yes. He said, "I didn't understand it that way." I said, "Goddamn, I made it clear as hell and you and I were the only two sitting here at the table so there wasn't any way you could have misunderstood me." Then he really got upset. As a matter of fact, he had a guy in the brig there that was a Puerto Rican kid, and he asked to go down there on a reenlistment thing. His markings were 4.9, 4.9, all through his first enlistment. In fact, he was a photo technician in a VMCJ outfit, and he was in the brig, this guy. So I talked to the guys in the brig too, and there was no doubt in my mind, except for one of them, maybe they had some problems with, but every one of them had been a good Marine in my way of thinking, and he just ran them in there.

So, anyway, he really got upset when I told him I was recommending that he be relieved, and he said, "Doesn't past performance have anything to do with this? It helped the young corporal in the brig." I said, "Well, about as much as-- It was Corporal such and such who you got sitting there in the brig that had 4.9, 4.9 markings before he came here. You evidently didn't give him any consideration that way. I'm grading you on what you're doing now and you've failed as far as I'm concerned." So I came back and recommended it, and they did, they relieved him. He also wanted to see Gen Walt, and I said, "Look, you could come back," and he said, "Can I call Gen Walt?" I said, "You're barracks commander.

You can call him any time you want. You don't have to ask me or anybody else. You can talk directly to the Commandant any time you want," but I said, "If you want to come back there when I debrief, you can sit in there on the debrief. I have nothing to hide. I'm going to tell him exactly what I'm telling you now."

So he didn't choose to do that, but he wrote a long letter, I guess, saying that he thought it was a bit unfair that I wasn't there long enough to really find out what was going on and stuff like that, but in the end they did relieve him because he was running good people out of the service. And then I found out that I guess the type of guy he is. Gen Chapman was coming down there. The Commandant was coming down there for a visit and he was going to visit with the Governor. The admiral was going to accompany him, so the admiral told me, he said, "I thought that this would be a good time for the colonel to let the community see him, that he's going in also to see the Governor, so I invited him to go along with the Commandant." And he said, no, they had a ballgame that day and he just couldn't see his way clear to go.

Frank: This barracks commander?

Fris: Colonel.

Frank: Couldn't meet the Commandant?

Fris: He had a ballgame to go to, the barracks ballgame, see, so I mentioned that to the Chief when I got back, Gen Van Ryzin who was outstanding.

Frank: Oh, yeah.

Fris: Outstanding Chief.

Frank: Great, great person.

Fris: Oh, boy. And he said, "Well, Gen Chapman told me that when he came back from that visit and I kind of said to him, 'Well, why would he do that?' And he said, 'Well, he's sort of looking after his troops.' So Gen Chapman sort of"--

Frank: He knew what the score was?

Fris: Oh, yes, but to me this guy was something else, I'll tell you.

Frank: A hell of a combat record.

Fris: He did have that. He had a combat record, and that's why he wanted to talk to Gen Walt, and then Gen Walt came to me and talked to me. I guess we were down at 8th and I or something and he came up to me and he says, "Hey, Ed, I just wanted to tell you that you did the right thing." He said,

"That guy was good in combat, but he's burned himself out and he ought to go."

Frank: Who is he, can you say?

Fris: Oh, I can say.

Frank: All right.

Fris: But--

Frank: Actually, you were IG for two years, August '69 to October '71, or maybe I've got it--

Fris: Oh, no, no no. No, I came up and I think it was in August of--

Frank: I'm sorry.

Fris: I had Programs at that period. Until October '71, I think it was July or August of '70 until October '71 I had Programs working for Chaisson.

Frank: They don't have you down there. They've got you--until October 22nd you were in Company A. They've got you down as Inspector General for 26 months.

Fris: No, huh huh. No, one year. No, then I came up and from there and worked for Gen Chaisson. He had Programs and then he moved up to take P&P.

Frank: P&P, right.

Fris: And then they moved me up to take his job as--and there's another guy I never worked with before. I guess I met him down in Saigon one time, but I got concerned about the fact that I'm going to be working in a job that the guy just moved out of and he's moved up one notch, and, is he still going to be doing that or what kind of a position am I going to be in, so I went up there just to pay a call on him, and sat down. The first thing he said was, "Ed, you're going in normally what's a hell of a position. You know, a guy is moving on up, but I want to guarantee you that I'm not going to interfere in your work at all and any time you want any help from me, you feel free to come in and see me, even if I'm holding a meeting, and you want to talk to me you come right in and talk to me, and if you want to go see the Chief of Staff, you go see the Chief of Staff and just tell me, keep me informed on what's going on." And you know, it worked that way. I never had one problem. It was really, really a rewarding experience working with him.

Frank: John Chaisson was outstanding, superlative--

Fris: He really had it.

Frank: Personable, low key.

Fris: But he really, like I say, couldn't have been a nicer guy to work for.

Frank: What were you doing up at those Plans or Programs?

Fris: I had Programs.

Frank: You had Programs?

Fris: He had Plans and Programs, see, the combination, you know, the OpDep, and I had--

Frank: Right, he was the OpDep.

Fris: Yes.

Frank: Well, who had Plans, then, when you had Programs?

Fris: Well, Chaisson. He moved up to take that.

Frank: Oh, P&P?

Fris: Yes, they had P&P and Programs. They didn't have--

Frank: It wasn't separate at that time?

Fris: No.

Frank: I see.

Fris: Well, maybe I should say that they did. They had a deputy under him, and it seems to me that it was a--yes, it was. It was LaHue, Frosty LaHue. LaHue had Plans, yes. I'm mistaken. He had Plans.

Frank: Right. I always thought that they had two deputies, one for Plans, one for Programs.

Fris: Yes, that's right, he did.

Frank: What were you doing as--what was going on with Programs?

Fris: Well, the whole thing, again, you know, the whole Marine Corps structure and funding, the whole works there. There, again, very interesting because you had to sort of balance the Marine Corps and try to be a go between competing factions, and one of the big competing ones, of course, is aviation and ground, and who is going to get what monies, and, of course, most of the money that comes to aviation comes from the Navy anyway, so it doesn't get involved in it like you're robbing something from the ground side. But in the people area it really gets involved, and I know one of the big ones that always was a contention was the fact that aviation has

grown and they haven't--they have grown in numbers of squadrons. They haven't put any in cadre, and the ground has put all these companies in cadre status, and, we've got to get that straightened out, and it's always been my contention and still is that the reason that the--well, there were two reasons. One was that we did go to two-place airplane which increased it slightly on the aviation side. The big increase, though, was in helicopters because we increased the numbers and squadrons of helicopters quite a bit during the Vietnam war.

But the other big area was in the area of computers, and I remember at that time I asked to get a rundown on the number of MOS's, computer MOS's, that we had, and there were 2,800 people, and I said, "Now, look, those guys have come out of those ground units. The ones also in aviation and helicopters to be fair, the helicopter and then the two-place airplane, there was an increase there, but where they were really hurting was in the computer field, and before we had computers, all of those guys were in companies in the ground unit, but you'd have a hard time convincing people of that, and I know at the time that Gen Chapman, of course, was a--was the big pusher of computer management and what have you, so--

Frank: I remember when the program started at Headquarters, I guess Hank Smart was involved with it and, of course, Sam Jaskilka took over and ran with it.

Fris: Yes, right.

Frank: The Marine Corps, I think, was late coming into computerization. Let me--you were talking about the great expansion of helicopters. Wasn't there considerable conflict at that time between DOD, McNamara, and Enthoven versus Chaisson, the Commandant, the Marine Corps regarding the--what were they called, pilot seats the--

Fris: Oh, yes. McCutcheon was always with Enthoven, arguing like mad with Enthoven on the thing, the requirements for the numbers of pilots.

Frank: Right, yes. Uh huh.

Fris: And they used to have all kinds of knock down and drag outs on that thing, and Enthoven would come out with his statistics and what have you, and they just never meshed with what McCutcheon had, so there was a big to do over that for a long time, and then one of the things that I know McCutcheon didn't want to do because it was sort of playing into Enthoven thing is that McCutcheon didn't want to send pilots for training out of the Naval Air Training Command because he sent helicopter pilots to the Army and he sent fixed wing pilots to the Air Force, and it was simply because the Navy could not do it, and we needed the pilots, and McCutcheon told him. He said, "You know, I sympathize with you and I know that we're playing in

their hands as far as saying that let the Air Force do all the training for everybody, and, of course, the Navy wants to hold onto their own Naval Training Command." And McCutcheon went ahead and did that anyway. Since that time--well, in fact, I guess during that time--a lot of these guys were sort of like bastards in the family that had gone through either the helicopter or the fixed wing only type deal, they were sort of looked down on, and I'm sure that that's all past, but at that time--McCutcheon is the one that insisted that they do that because he said, "We need these many pilots. Navy, can you do it?" And the Navy said, no, they can't, so he had no alternative but to go and get the trained pilots wherever he could get them.

Frank: The other thing that I can remember also in the Vietnam period, I think it affected helicopter pilots much more so than the fixed wing types, that the helicopter pilots would do their tour. Their turnaround to Vietnam was much greater. As a result, you were getting a lot of resignations, more so than retirements. Also, even if there was a greater turnaround, they would be assigned to the 2d Wing or they'd go out on deployment or go to the Med which was raising hell with the family situation.

Fris: Right. That was a tough situation. And, as a matter of fact, the other one was, even after that, was the VMCJ outfit. In fact, that's why, while I was up there at aviation,

we split the two off and made one squadron on one coast and one on the other, and we also, and Gen Cushman signed the thing. We said we'd like to get them out there just on a six month TAD thing and let their families stay in the quarters. Now, it makes a little bit of a hardship on somebody else that's moving in, with their family and these quarters are taken up, but I think it's easier for the family as a unit there to find a place to live rather than having to put this wife out with the kids, and then changing schools and everything else, so we were able to do that. But that was the same reason. It was the seeing each other coming and going. You know, the community was so small there was no way you could keep units out there manned without seeing them coming and going.

Frank: Yes. And of course, you bring up another problem which is endemic to all the services today, but the role of the service as a social welfare organization whereas, say, in the '30's or World War II, post-World War II, you could deploy units and the individuals had to be ready for expeditionary duty. Now, you can't touch a guy without being concerned about how he's going to move his family or whether the family is going to be taken care of, where they're going to go and so on. I don't know what the answer is to it, and I guess--

Fris: They had the answer in the early '30's when didn't the Marine Corps used to say if they wanted you to have a wife, they'd issue you one?

Frank: That's right.

Fris: And so at that time you didn't have that many problems, but anymore, with married people being in there, and they sort of cater to the married too. You know, they--

Frank: Well, the bachelor officers--I can recall being a bachelor officer--always complained that it was the married officer got his BAQ whether he lived in Harry Lee Hall or not.

Fris: Well, now, of course, a married guy gets more money than a bachelor does simply because he's got a dependent, see, there, and the bachelors are saying, you know, "Well, I'm doing the same job he is. Why should he get paid more than me? You don't do that out in industry or anywhere else in government or anything like that."

Batha: You don't get a difference in base.

Fris: Oh, not base--

Batha: Or subsistence?

Fris: Oh, yes.

Batha: You get the BAQ, that's right. That's right.

Fris: You get a difference. Another one you get that I've always wondered about is if you live in the BOQ, the station commander, his staff, comes around and inspects your quarters periodically, but you can live on base in quarters as a family and they never come around and inspect.

Frank: There was a complaint that a guy was living in BOQ and drawing BAQ.

Fris: Yes.

Frank: Or vice versa, being out in combat and he's drawing BAQ. Why can't the--well, that was 30 years ago and it's still going on.

Fris: Yes. Oh, they'll never change that.

Frank: You next took over as CG of El Toro in '71, in October of '71.

Fris: Right.

Frank: You were CG, Marine Corps Station, El Toro. You were Commander, CoMCABWest.

Fris: Well, that command, see, engulfs El Toro, Yuma, and Santa Ana plus the facility down at Pendleton or the units in

Pendleton. And this was a period of under a year because I got selected that summer for--the next summer for two star, and then that's when I came back to--

Frank: Was this a one-star command?

Fris: It's a two-star billet, but it was a--

Frank: But you had it as one star?

Fris: Yes. And I relieved Hank Hise who suddenly retired, wanted to retire. He went back to the University of Texas, I think, had a good opportunity back there, so he retired and then they sent me out there.

Frank: What was going on out there at this--

Fris: Well, I think out there the biggest problem, again, is noise.

Frank: ...deployments.

Fris: No, it's a noise problem.

Frank: Noise problem.

Fris: Airplane noise and stuff and all of the development that's going around there and wanting to close the base or make the base

a joint civilian military airfield, and there are just all kinds of problems.

Frank: Well, that's been a constant--that's been pinging on the existence of El Toro there.

Fris: Right.

Frank: That once the orange groves were sold and they started developing around that area, they wanted the Marines out of El Toro. The civilian interests were quite powerful politically too, by the way.

Fris: Oh, yes. And then when they, you know, built that Leisure World there, there was a big to do over the green belt that they have on the landing runway where the GCA approach is. I guess through the courts they, I guess, had threatened to go to court or something, and this guy signed an agreement that he would not build any housing units in there. The only thing in that green belt would be like a golf course or someplace that--something that didn't have large groups of people in in case of a crash or something.

And then while I was there, as a matter of fact, they--this guy had taken it to court, the Federal court, saying that he was deprived of money that he could have made had he been able to develop it, and in deference to them he didn't develop it, and then I guess that the Justice Department

agreed, and they paid him several million dollars for that, and this was while I was out there that happened. I mean, it wasn't in our hands. We got word that that was going on because it was all handled up here at the--

Frank: Do you think that El Toro is obsolete?

Fris: I don't think it is. I think that the air station in Santa Ana, the helicopter station, is. I think that that station, all those helicopters, ought to be down at Camp Pendleton. That's my view, and I think that they could close that thing, sell it, you know, the property is really valuable. Of course, I guess they'd want to preserve those hangars because they are--

Frank: They are historical. As a matter of fact, they've been declared.

Fris: Yes, and they could do that, but in the meantime the argument for making El Toro a civilian military airfield is that all of that affluent community in Newport Beach don't like the noise of the jets that are taking off and landing at Orange County Airport, and my contention is that if they closed the helicopter facility and they didn't have the interference problem with the helicopter traffic pattern, with that one they could extend their runway back toward Santa Ana air facility, build a freeway underneath it, under that

runway, and then they could take off and they'd be real high before they got over that area that's really complaining, and they could solve both problems that way.

Now, the people at Leisure World are on our side. In fact, they told me, they said, "We're on your side if all we're dealing with is you because you were here first, and we got the green belt and we'll put up with that so long as you stay on the green belt," but they said, "As soon as you agree to have this a joint military civilian airfield, then we're going to fight you all the way and we're going to fight to close the damned thing down because we don't want them to bring their noise over here. We're putting up with this, but we don't want to put up with any more of it." And I have a hard time arguing with their rationale on that too. You know, they're saying you were here first, so we moved in later and we'll put up with that, but don't bring that stuff over from Newport that they don't want and give it to us.

Frank: Had the--I know that the increase of pollution and everything affected Southern California down through El Toro, down in San Diego, whenever smog conditions were bad especially and in the early part of the year, February, March, affects San Diego. I guess that's the wintertime there, has increased to a large extent. Did that affect El Toro operations much?

Fris: Well, it did. I mean it reduced visibility sometimes to where it was, you were on instruments rather than--but

to me you always had it there at El Toro, maybe not to the extent, but I remember in the late '40's and the orange groves were there, they'd light those smudge pots off. You couldn't see anything. In fact, you'd wake up in the morning and you'd have black in your nose and your mouth in your bedroom, you're sleeping there and sucking the stuff in, so it used to be bad then. There were days I recall when it was smoggy as hell and you're looking for an airplane in the pattern, especially when we'd fly the field carrier landing practice. You'd have a hard time seeing the guy because of the smog that was there. It's just a basin that anything that's lifted in the air is going to stay there because it's pushed in there to stay until one of those winds come out and gets it out of there.

But I think El Toro is a good airfield and I think that they could keep El Toro, but, like I say, I really feel that the Santa Ana facility ought to be--the helicopters ought to be down with the ground troops anyway, I think. You may disagree with me, but I believe--

Batha: No.

Fris: And that's where they do their ops. They go down that coast and then back up. Why not stay right there. They could build a field on the opposite side of the river from where the present field is and have a nice operation down there.

Frank: They've got enough room for it down there.

Fris: Oh, yes, and then they could eliminate all those problems they have back there with the--

Frank: They certainly have a--

Fris: --at Santa Ana.

Batha: I think much safer all the way around.

Fris: It would, and there is, that's going to be a--the chances are getting better every day that there is going to be a helicopter run into a commercial transport there at Orange County. I'm not saying it's going to be, but the chances are, every day that you keep doing that, we're getting closer to it. Yes, something in mid air.

Frank: You were selected for your second star in '72 and went up to become DC/S (Air). See, that didn't become three star until when?

Fris: No, that came after Wilson came in, Tom Miller.

Frank: That's right. Tom Miller was three star.

Fris: Yes. Because I went to Quantico and then Vic Armstrong relieved me, and then when Wilson came in, why, he brought Tom Miller in and made that a three-star billet.

Frank: You had some questions relating to his--

Batha: Well, mine are in general terms, so when we finish up--yes, we may want to--what kind of problems while you were DC/S (Air). You know, everybody has their own pet problems up there. Which ones were yours?

Fris: Oh, I think they're the same ones, really. The big problem was getting the money from the Navy and that was one problem I guess is just insurmountable until the Secretary of the Navy chooses to give the Marine Corps a certain amount of those dollars and say you work up your program and then if you need more than that or less than that, you work with the Navy, then, on the thing. But now the way it works, the Navy works up the program and then you take what they give you or fight them on it, and I say you're sitting at a poker table with no chips and it's pretty tough to do that.

Frank: We were talking about problems with money and so on.

Fris: Yes. That's, like I say, is the biggest one, and then the other one that he hit on was the Harrier, and we were pushing the Harrier an awful lot and against an awful tide. The Marine Corps against the Navy, really, and DOD, but I really --I felt all along that the Navy was telling DOD that they didn't want us to get into it and the whole thing, so they were really behind our back fighting us in that area. I know

the Navy went into these different programs. They said, "Rather than going with the Harrier, what we'd like to do is go with the-something that will go supersonic," so they thought either that the lift lift cruise concept or the thrust augmented wing concept would be the way to go. The lift lift cruise, that's where you got one engine that--or a set of engines--that lifts you up, and then the other engines take over and propel you this way, so that you could go supersonic. And that had been tried by several people and proposed by a lot more, I guess, but the Germans had tested one. Actually built one and tested it, and then they gave up. They canceled out on the program. And the Navy wanted to buy that airplane from the Germans and try it, and my argument there was that why--I mean, if they have tried it and said it's no good, hell, they would have kept the damned thing if it was worth a damn, and why should we go now spend that money. Of course, their argument--they didn't say that it was their argument, but they wanted to stall any work on the Harrier.

So then they went into the thrust augmented wing, and I think they took--I believe it was an A-4...

End Tape 2, Side 1

Session III

Tape 2, Side 2

Fris: . . . in Columbus, Ohio, in the plant that's out there. If they weren't doing anything else in that plant, I think at the time they were overhauling some--what the hell are observation airplanes? OV-10's.

Batha: OV-10's.

Fris: And the plant was effectively empty except for the sort of work they were doing on that thrust augmented wing, and the theory there is that what you do is you take the thrust and the jet output from a jet engine and bend it back around and then take it back through the wings and down through these orifices there and it would give you--you could augment the thrust of that particular engine, and it seems to me there was a 1.55 thrust augmentation ratio that they had to get before they could really make it fly. And they played with this thing and just wasted money, and there was no way that damn thing was going to fly, but, again, that was another thing that they wanted to test. And we kept--our argument was give that to NASA. You're talking about way in the future. There's really decades before something like that's going to be perfected. Do that with NASA. Well, of course, we lost because they, again, wanted to show that they're spending money in a vertical airplane type deal, so--

And then I remember one time we had--and I'm trying to think of the name of the Under Secretary of the Navy at that time, but he's a lay minister also, was Under Secretary of the Navy, and he gave--they gave him a presentation, the Navy did, on the status of the three programs, and then made a recommendation as to which way to go, and I remember the end of it, the Under Secretary said, "Well, I'm shocked. I understand everything you said, but I'm shocked at your recommendation because everything you said favors the Harrier, and, yet, you're going for one of these others." See, well, that kind of had them mumbling around for a bit. They never did change and never will. They fought that program all the way, and I understand that--the Navy's problem. They want to keep the big carriers, and if they get a short takeoff and landing airplane, why, it's going to force them into accepting arguments that these people say, "Let's don't buy them as big. Let's buy some smaller carriers."

I, frankly, think they need a mix, but that's something else. I think the big carriers are good also, but they, for instance, they use the argument that they wanted to build a bigger Navy because of the Soviets had now build a carrier and have a lift, lift, cruise VSTOL airplane on there, and it's really quite a threat, and I said, "Well, hell, if it's a threat, why do you keep saying that the VSTOL airplane isn't a threat then? We're trying to get one to, you know, go our way," but, like I say, every argument that we proposed, why, they just shot down because, again, they were in charge of the dollars and there's nothing you can do about it.

Frank: One of the accusations that was made early on, came about especially after the unification fight following World War II that many--because of the relationship of Marine aviators to the Navy, because of the funding, they are much closer in bed to the Navy, much more in bed with the Navy than with the Marine Corps. Did that actually prevail? Did that--

Fris: Not while I was there. Of course, I'm one of the guys that feels that Marine aviation is in support of Marine ground. I mean that's why you're there, and everything that I did or at least what I thought I was doing was doing everything to satisfy that particular requirement, and all of the arguments I had were over there. We had a few arguments with the ground side, like in the training of enlisted people and what have you and that they wanted to take it out of aviation and put it in one training environment and what have you or one training office.

I always had real troubles with the Navy side, and they would tell me one thing and do another, and I used to--I was very frustrated with the Navy side of it, but with the Marine side, like I say, I didn't see a problem there. To me Marine aviation is there for one thing and that is to support the ground forces, and I did everything that I knew how to to go that way.

Frank: You think there are many senior and many Marine aviators who think otherwise?

Fris: Oh, yes.

Frank: They'd like to be separate?

Fris: Oh, yes, and I know some of them and I don't want to use their names, but have come right out and said, for instance, the ground wants to do this or that, and bull, the ground stay out of my business. I'm running aviation and I'm not--I don't want any crap from them. I mean no, we have those people around, and then within aviation you also have people that are all fighter and no attack, you know, you have those also. Again, you just have to stay there and lay down the law as to what has priority, and to me priority was the Marine Corps, and we were a part of that in supporting those ground forces. And if the ground forces came out with ideas that they thought we ought to do--in fact, if they wanted to recommend that we eliminate fighters, I wouldn't object to them making that recommendation, but I would try with my rationale to disprove it, sure, but to me, we're all a part of the Marine Corps and if we can keep it within the family like that and do that, then argue it out, fine. They might even come out with some ideas that are better than ours. If they do, why, we'd be foolish not accept those.

Frank: I recall General Chaisson making a point when he was Chief of Staff, he made a presentation to the SecNav Advisory Committee on Naval history, telling it about a number of problems

the Marine Corps was facing. One of the real problems was the high expense of aviation, where,with the Harrier and other planes, it was becoming really onerous and a decision was going to have to be made whether aviation was getting too expensive, the aviation portion of the Marine Corps budget was getting out of hand, and I'm certain that you as DC/S (Air) had to face this all the time what with the expensive aircraft, expensive parts and the whole package, the people in training, then, was just a small part of this.

Fris: Yes, uh huh. And the basic argument there is that I use and still use is, I don't think that that should be that much of a concern to the Marines, the ground side of the Marine Corps because regardless, that is blue dollars and naval aviation is going to spend it on their stuff if the Marines don't get it. It's not going to go to the ground side of the Marine Corps. They're going to argue their point within themselves, within the blue water and the air Navy, and they're going to get their share of it, and they're going to spend it on themselves if they don't spend it on the Marine Corps. So I don't think that it has any effect that way. Now, you can say, well, if we had less you could reduce the overall budget, and I say you won't. I say that the Navy is going to take that money and spend it on themselves and we're going to be standing out to there, wanting.

Frank: Well, then, the argument is faulty in a sense because--

Fris: I think it is.

Frank: --the concern that he had for increased expense for aviation really wasn't out of the Marine Corps' hide.

Fris: No. I think that the point he's trying to make, I believe, I don't know what point it is, but I think the point he's trying to make is, again, if the Marine Corps likes to say that we can give you this much defense for this many dollars, well, those dollars per Marine are going up when you increase either side of the budget, and I think that's where the problem was. Like I say, the point he was trying to make because, the Marines have always said that we can give you more defense for the dollar than anybody else. Well, when you on one side start increasing that budget, that's going to raise that per Marine cost and I think that that's what they're really concerned about because, like I say, I don't think that the overall budget is going to do anything. I think that there's where the problem was.

Frank: Yeah. Well, he really didn't have to worry because the Marine Corps wasn't paying for that aircraft.

Fris: No, no. It was a different budget completely.

Frank: Right, which I don't think too many outside people understand.

Fris: Yes. There's a lot of them that don't. I was surprised sitting here talking to a guy in DOD one time. We were trying to--they said that they wanted to cut out the fighters out of the Marine Corps. Why can't the Navy or the Air Force provide fighter support for you? And we were showing them why it would be cheaper to do it within the Marine Corps, and this guy who was in charge was sitting there and said something to the effect that, well, you know, it would cut the Marine Corps budget if you did that, and I said, "Well, it would cut the Navy budget, not the Marine Corps." He said, "What do you mean?" And I said, "Well, the Marine Corps doesn't get any of those dollars. That's blue dollars, that's in the Navy." "Oh, really?" And I said, "Yes." And then he said, "Well, you do buy all your parts, though, don't you? The Marine Corps buys the parts for the airplanes?" And I said, "No, they don't. They come out of the Navy blue dollars also." And here's a high official in the Department of Defense who wasn't even aware of it.

Frank: Well, now, okay, the--so Navy, the black shoes and the brown shoes argue about their splitting the budget. Is there an argument between Marine aviation and the brown shoe Navy about how much of it's coming to the Marine Corps?

Fris: Oh, yes, yes.

Frank: Of what--both types of aircraft?

Fris: Types of aircraft and systems within aircraft also.

Frank: Systems within aircraft, yes.

Fris: And, for instance, when the big to do came about, the F-14 in the Marine Corps, now we didn't want to go with the F-14 at all. We said that what we want to do is get some new F-4's, the ones that we have were just running out of time, and we wanted some new F-4's. Well, and at that time--I've forgotten what the F-14 was costing, around $14 million or something like that, I believe--and, in fact, Gen Anderson talking to the--he was the Assistant Commandant at the time--talking to the DOD people, and he convinced them that, look, if you're going to give all those dollars to the Navy, you've got to do something for the Marine Corps because our fighter aircraft are being outdated.

So DOD on their own, over and above what the Navy said they were going to do, they gave us, it seems to me it was somewhere around $932 million or something like that, $931 million to buy F-4's for the Marine Corps. The Navy was pushing like hell for us to go the F-14, and we said, "No, we can do everything we want with the F-4." And then we had a big meeting one time--well, I guess we were at the House Armed Services Committee talking there, and something came up about the Marine Corps getting the F-4 and the Marine Corps getting the--and the Navy getting the F-14, the Marine Corps the F-4. "Why can't you both fly the same airplane,"

and all of this, and Warner was the Secretary at that time, and he said, "Well, we'll have an answer for you sometime on that, but right now it looks like that's the best way to go."

It seems to me that was on a Friday, and on a Monday we get a call--or I got a call--to meet Gen Anderson and Gen Cushman over at the Deputy Secretary of Defense--Clements was Deputy Secretary at that time, and the Secretary of the Navy was in there and the head of naval aviation and then they had myself in there and CNO was in there also, and they were talking about going--said they were going to cancel the Marine F-4's and go the F14, and Jesus Christ, I couldn't believe it. That's the way it was. We had a choice, take the F-14 or nothing, and Warner had given that edict, I guess. I don't know who he had talked to or anything, but he--and Zumwalt, of course, was the one that was pushing the thing.

So, damned if that day we didn't go over and, in fact, I guess the meeting with the--with Clements ended and we went out of there, and then there was a meeting in Secretary of the Navy's office with Cushman and Zumwalt, I guess, and they had discussed it in there, and we go over to the hearings and they said, "Nope, the Marine Corps is going to go with the F-14." Like I say, it just happened just like that and was really a complete shock to me. And then I had to go over to the Committee staff to talk to them because we had insisted that we didn't want the F-14, we wanted the F-4, so we had one hell of a time up there, or I had a hell of a time.

I'm trying to tell these guys, you know, my recommendation has always been to go with the F-4 and that this was with SecNav and said, "Well, you run aviation, yeah, but I don't run the Marine Corps," and the decision was made behind those closed doors, and that's the way it went, so there was a big to do over that thing, quite a few repercussions I guess.

Frank: What finally happened?

Fris: Well--

Frank: You had to go F-14?

Fris: Well, we were going F-14, and then when the Commandant changed, then Wilson canceled out on the F-14.

Frank: Uh huh. That's right, that's right, I remember that.

Fris: And, like I say, it was a real to do, and I'm sure it was strictly a political thing that--I wasn't in the closed doors, so I don't know just what went on back there, but it was a--to me it was a--from what I saw I would say it was Zumwalt convincing Warner that that's the way they ought to go so that the Navy could get more dollars for the F-14, and they knew that they could cancel out on the F-14 very easily when the next Commandant came in because most of the Marines didn't want it anyway.

Frank: I've got a question that shows a lack of knowledge. You say the F-4's were getting tired. What happens to them that they are phased out?

Fris: Metal fatigue, see, and then the--

Frank: No, but I mean, where do they go?

Fris: Well, most of them they send to, if they're still flyable, they'll send them out to Davis Monthen where the Air Force--where DOD has sort of a graveyard. They put them in moth--well, they don't even have to put them in mothballs there because the climate is good so they don't deteriorate. They put them there, and then the other ones, I don't know what the hell they do with them when they--

Frank: Sell them to other countries or something?

Fris: No, I don't--

Batha: They just scrap them.

Fris: Yes, they scrap them, but, like I say, I don't know what they do with the--

Frank: Okay, it's not like the prop-driven stuff where the AD's were sold to France and other countries.

Fris: Maybe they do. I don't know. I don't know what they do.

Frank: In '74, getting down here toward the end, you're nominated by the Commandant to get your third star and take over CG, MCDEC?

Fris: Uh huh.

Frank: Was this a kind of surprise to you?

Fris: Well, no, I was due, you know, I was there for two years and I figured that two years was long enough. It came as a surprise to me, yes, that I was the one chosen to go down there because, like I say, I didn't--

Frank: You had no background. You hadn't been down to Quantico for--

Fris: No, I went down there to school, you know, and I--well, before I went to postgraduate school I was down there at the air station for--just sort of a standby deal, and I was the special services officer, I guess.

Frank: Transient.

Fris: Yes, yes. But the background that I had, of course, was in the R&D because of the Development Center down there,

and in the schooling--I guess you're in the schooling business all your life in the Marine Corps, so--

Frank: Yes.

Fris: And--but, I'll tell you, that was a good way to serve your last tour because for one thing, like my wife said, "Boy, you can wind-down down there," so when you--up there at Headquarters, I always left home at 6:30 and never got home before 7:30 in the evening, and I'd get in the office at 6:30 in the morning or at 7:00--it took me 30 minutes to drive there, but I'd have an hour before the phone started to ring to read messages and what have you. Then, of course, I always brought home a big old thing of stuff at night, get home at 7:30 and have dinner. I'd call her and say, "Well, I'm leaving the office now," and so she'd know in 30 minutes I'd be home and we'd eat and then I'd go down and start reading over those damn papers and everything.

I always felt it took, you know, and I know, I was on the staff many times, and you had to write to all of these papers, and I always wanted to see the damned things signed and out whenever I wrote one, so I carried that through to where if somebody was working on one of those and it was ready to go out, well, I'd read the damned thing that night, so that I could sign it and get it out that next day. It was really a full-time job, really a full-time job, and so when I went down to Quantico it was really a different thing.

For instance, down there the schedule is made out and it hardly ever changes for you. It's just a standard old schedule, and you go and you meet those times. Up there when the phone started ringing at 8:00 o'clock, the schedule just changed almost immediately. There were all kind of higher priority things that came up and that you had to get diverted to, and it was a pretty hectic thing.

But, like I say, down at Quantico that was a one big thing, was to be able to wind down. And the other thing was that I spent a lot of time with the OCS, Staff NCO Academy, and the Basic School, and seeing all these youngsters that were coming along and really outstanding people, you know, and it just makes you feel, boy, the Marine Corps is going to be even greater if it can be, than it is today, simply because of the quality of these people that are coming in there. And I thoroughly enjoyed that again, being down there with the young ones.

I was able, I guess, to speak to each one of those classes that they had there. I spent about two hours with them, an hour talking and then an hour answering questions which was always a lot of fun, and then the other one was the Basic School had those receptions and you'd go to those receptions, and then they'd have their wives there too, the young wives, and my wife would always sort of peel off and they're always questioning her about the life and the overseas tours and what have you, and then I would be with the guys, and then we'd end up going downstairs to the Rathskeller, and just have a real good time.

So, like I say, it was a real pleasure all the way. The schools are set up that--well, they've been doing it for years, and there's a few innovations that go in there, but, just it isn't all that much, and so it was, like I say, it was a real pleasure. I thoroughly enjoyed that.

Frank: Was that a short tour for you?

Fris: Yes. See, when--

Frank: Did you get caught up in the Anderson business?

Fris: No. I may have, but I--

Frank: You were not aware of it?

Fris: No, I could have stayed there another year. See, when the thing came out, when the announcement came out, then I called Gen Wilson, and I learned this from Gen Chaisson, as a matter of fact, when I worked for him. No, guess he was the Chief of Staff by this time, and when Cushman was nominated--he told me, and I agreed with him wholeheartedly. He said that, I feel that when you make three star, that particular Commandant made you a three star, when a new Commandant goes in you should retire and let him pick his own people. Now, he said that he would retire--he said, however, he was willing to stay on until the 1st of July if Cushman wanted him to, just for continuity because there was such a turnover.

Frank: Right, at that time.

Fris: So when I called Wilson, I said that,"congratulations and everything, but I do intend to retire on the 1st of September, and because of the strong feeling I have that you ought to pick your own three starers and the only way you can do that--I don't want you asking me to retire. I want to just go ahead and do it that way," and he said, "No, you can stay another year there if you want, but I believe in two years for three stars. You've been a three star for just one year, so you can stay there another year as far as I'm concerned."

I said, "Well, no. I appreciate that, but I also feel very strongly that you ought to go ahead and do that," plus the fact that at that time there was a legal implication some way on your retirement pay or something on the amount that you got. I've forgotten what it was, and since there wasn't a war on, I said, "Hell, I'll just go ahead and go now, then, and then you can go ahead and set up your own staff as far as that goes."

Frank: Well, actually you did not get caught up as an Anderson man because he gave you a vote of confidence by--

Fris: He told me that I could stay there another year, yes. But, then again, I went because, like I say, in deference to him, and, like I say, I really believe that. I believe that the three stars ought to all go when a new Commandant comes in.

Frank: Yes.

Fris: Because he's the guy that chose them. You know, nobody else is involved in it or anything. There's no board.

Frank: Right.

Fris: It's he that selects you for a particular job, and I just feel that, go and let this guy pick up his own.

Frank: Like any other appointee in Government when a new President--

Fris: Sure, let him run it the way he wants, and I'm sure that there are a few people around that a lot of people, if they were Commandant, would pick that guy regardless of who he was.

Frank: Yes.

Fris: But I think that most of them have served with certain people, and they have certain favorites they have trust and faith in, and those are the ones that they would like to go, so that's my philosophy, and I still believe it, I still believe that that's the way to do it.

Frank: Do you have any views about the Anderson affair that you care to make--

Fris: Not--

Frank: --public?

Fris: No, not to make public, I don't think. I think that he's one of the smartest men that have ever been around. I mean that--he was way ahead of everybody on the thinking and everything else. He was a great guy to work for, as far as I was concerned as long as you did your work.

Frank: If he liked you.

Fris: Well, and if you didn't lie to him. If you lied to him--I've found the people that had troubles with him weren't directly honest with him. Now, like I say, I don't know about this liking people because he evidently liked me because I never had any problems with him at all. Like I say, a brilliant mind and really supported you. I saw him one day read off a president of a company. I think this guy at the time was a president of the company. He had evidently been calling--remember Kathy, the secretary up there in R&D?

Frank: Yes.

Fris: I don't know if you--

Frank: Yes.

Fris: --remember, but he'd been calling and trying to get hold of Gen Anderson, and Gen Anderson wasn't in, so, finally, this one time, I guess, when he called he said something to the effect that, "Well, isn't that really convenient for you now," and she was really insulted, and she told Gen Anderson, and I happened to be there when she told him. He told her to get him on the phone and he really put him in his place. I'm not kidding you. Really did, and he supports his people that way. He really does. He's a real doer and smart, and, like I say, he can weed out the crap and get right to the point so fast it's just amazing to me, just amazing.

Frank: How do you account for the situation as it happened?

Fris: I don't know how to account for that. Now, I know that--

Frank: Overweening ambition?

Fris: Maybe so. I don't know. I got the letter. I was not aware that anything like that had gone on, and I had signed my thing and made some comments and sent it on back in, and, like I say, I was completely shocked when they said that that had happened, and I still don't know exactly what happened, how it was done or what have you, only what I read in the paper. I don't know what--

Frank: What would you say now was the highlight of your whole

career in the Marine Corps? Who were some of the outstanding people that you consider to be role models?

Fris: Well, in the people concern, of course, I'd have to say Gen Anderson because, like I say, he--I had nothing but real good relationships with him and satisfying things to where I saw him really do things, straighten out real messes, so I'd have to say that. Chaisson was the other one. I really admired Chaisson. Van Ryzin, I admired him. As a Chief of Staff he was so efficient. He could get stuff in and out of there. I admire Gen Chapman for his stand when all of the leniency came about to where they were going to--well, let the hair grow, let the beer in the barracks and all that sort of stuff, and he stood firm, and he used that one argument that history has shown that the most disciplined army is always the winner, and when you start letting go on all of these standards and stuff, why, you lose discipline. And that's the argument he used all the time and that's all he had to say, and it worked out. I really admired Gen Chapman. I think he did one hell of a job.

There's a lot of others in there that I really admired too. I mean these are the ones that I guess I'd worked real closely with that were real dandies. Youngdale, Gen Youngdale, I admired the way he ran that board out there. It was a real touchy situation, and I really admired the way he handled that thing. McCutcheon was a guy that I certainly admired, again, a real doer. McCutcheon wasn't the type of a guy to

sit and shoot the bull with anybody. He would sit and solve the problem with you, but then he wanted to get right on to the next problem, you know, he didn't want to waste time doing anything. He used to get there in the morning, I guess he'd get there about 6:00 in the morning and then he would leave at 5:00 o'clock in the evening if you didn't corner him at 5:00 o'clock, he was on his way out. He had his hat and coat in hand and away he was going home, see, but he was there at 6:00 in the morning, and I'm sure he was probably on the phone and everything else at home, but a real dynamic individual. And Gen Cushman, of course. He was a keen mind and had guts, was fearful of nothing or any individual.

I would say--well, Gen Kier. I can't leave him out. Gen Kier to me was another amazing man. He just amazed me. I used to sit in his staff meetings, and people would have a problem, and General Kier would sit there and say, well, after they had discussed it he would say, "Well, I remember we had that at Cherry Point in 1950 or something and the way we solved that," and he would name the guy that did it, on how they would solve the problem. I've seen him sit around the table and the staff would say, "Well, we've tried to do this and we got turned down on it. We'd like to go back again." And he'd say, "Well, you can go back again. I can tell you you're going to get the same answer." And they would do it, and sure enough, would get the same answer. Or if he agreed with them, he'd say, "Yeah, but try it this way," and then the

answer would come back approved. He was to me, he was such a fantastic man and really bright and knew the details. He would talk about a problem with a helicopter, with the armed helicopters, they were testing the armed helicopter concept, and he was involved in that thing, and he would go through the thing on where they would have to put the machine guns on the side or what have you, and the casings would be hitting the tail rotor and stuff and things that--he had all of this detail, and this was really late in his life in the Marine Corps, but he's just really a brilliant man and I really thoroughly admired him.

Also a thinker and gutsy guy is Paul Fontana. A terrific individual. I served with and really admired four sergeants major: Norm McConley, who was later commissioned and retired as a lieutenant colonel; Robert Winslow, one of my sergeants major in MACS-3; SgtMaj Robert W. Williams, my sergeant major in Vietnam; SgtMaj Black, my sergeant major at MCDEC, who later became Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. These were the greatest of Marines.

Well, like I say, there's an awful lot of others that I can say things about, but those come to mind right quick as some outstanding ones.

Frank: Do you have any questions?

Batha: Well, the only thing we didn't talk about. You sort of grew up in the Marine Corps at the same time helicopters did, and I just wonder what your impressions were of the

development of the helicopter and the community and its impact on what you had thought of as Marine aviation.

Fris: Well, of course, I never wanted to get into helicopters. We all had an opportunity to do that. They were always asking for volunteers, and, in fact, the guys that finally got sent were ordered there. They took them away with their heels dragging, but everyone, every friend of mine that went into it always came back and said he thoroughly enjoyed it and glad he did it. But my thought all along was, in fact, it reminds me of what you said about the Harrier, you know, that it doesn't have that much of a capability. Well, the first ones they had you could barely fly. They couldn't carry anything either, but they kept developing them, and that's why I feel that the Harrier does have a role to play later on once they get it really developed, and like I always say, John Glenn always went around in a little tin can, but, we've gone to the moon and back since then. But once you put enough effort into an area you can get there.

But on the helicopter thing in particular, I always saw a real big use for the helicopter. I mean that's one hell of a capability to be able to move stuff the way it does, just pick up and move and what have you. I mean that's--it's bound to be a revolutionary or have a revolutionary effect on the Marine Corps or any other outfit that it gets into, and, like I say, I never wanted to really get in them. I would still rather be in fixed wing, but I have all the

respect in the world for those guys, and watching them out there in Vietnam, the conditions that they were doing it in and what they were doing, to me, I had nothing but the highest admiration for all of them. It's just a--one hell of an advance, I think.

Batha: What did you think of the, probably one of the areas where the Marine Corps ran, particularly aviation has its own infighting is the dollars and, the assets that go to helicopters vice a fixed wing, and I think the area of the armed helicopter was an example. There was some doctrine originally that said, helicopters didn't have to be armed because the Marine fixed wing would take care of it and--

Fris: The fixed wing said that they wouldn't be armed. I mean they really--and I think I went over that, but I was up there at Headquarters when they were--

Batha: And you really didn't say anything about--

Fris: Didn't I? Oh, yes, they had--I was in there and I couldn't understand why they wouldn't arm the damned things, and the only thing I look at, again, I really believe in common sense and the golden rule, and one of the things is that if I were in that helicopter would I want to be able to shoot back at somebody if he's shooting at me, and there's no fixed wing around, or in any event he'll be able to shoot back, and there was no question in my mind that I'd want to do that.

Now, again, those were in the early days, but that time it did take extra weight and reduced what you could carry in those helicopters, and I think that that's really what the--how the objectors to arming the helicopters really won their fight. They would tell the ground people, "Look, you put that in and you're going to cut down all this capability, and we can handle it with fixed wing." I was always in favor of arming helicopters and I still think it's the greatest thing to do because it's an added capability that is really needed. It's not a nice thing to have. It's really needed.

Batha: But what to the--to the extent that now you have a helicopter that its only mission is to escort--essentially, what is close air support? At least the Air Force--

Fris: Well, they say it's close air support, but to me you've got to have something down there that will stay with those helicopters, and I say that that's the answer to it right now. I don't know of another one. That's the answer to it is let those guys down there in the vulnerable area and help them out because to me there's nothing more vulnerable than a whole damn flight of transport helicopters with Marines in there and waiting for an A-4 to come down periodically to drop a bomb. They need somebody down there all the time I think.

Batha: Did you, while you were DC/S (Air) get into any of the procurement discussions, when the Army was talking about the Cheyenne and everything, had that already passed?

Fris: Yes, that one had already passed, I think, while I was there, and we really never had--now, we always had discussions with the Congress and the budget on how many we could get and what have you, but I never had any--

Batha: I guess Gen Miller was in charge when he subverted the funds to get the twin engine Cobra. They had the G Cobra while you were there, and--

Fris: Yes, but we were buying the twin I think while I was there.

Batha: Well, that's what I'm saying. He had already gotten that through--

Fris: He might have. Of course, he wasn't DC/S (Air).

Batha: No.

Fris: At that time, but it was probably up there in the weapons thing. He may have, yes, but, like I say, it was already being purchased, and I know we had to defend the fact that we had to have twin engine stuff. We did get in arguments with DOD and the Congress on why don't you buy the same ones that the Army does, and then, finally, the Army turned around and said they wanted twin engine rather than us going their way, they wanted the twin engine helicopter.

And then, was it Gen Kier, or somebody said that--no, it was the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Information and Logistics, Jack Bowers, and Bowers said that, "I have a hard time following your argument," talking to us and the Navy, "that you need two engines because you're flying over water and what have you--you can lose that helicopter. You know, we're flying these commercial transports back and forth all the time, and they're not losing engines that often, so isn't it worth the risk?" And, of course, they're talking about different maintenance facilities and maintenance capabilities and everything else when you do that and working under stress which makes a hell of a difference, I think, on that thing, but I think he brought up a valid point is if that's your only argument, why the hell, go with that because they are more expensive, and then if you buy--each service buys a different one, why, that, too, is more expensive, so--

Frank: Early on, and I guess it began--in '57 you when you left the wing, 2d Wing, wing electronic . . . your active flying about came to an end did it not?

Fris: Oh, yes. I really lost out on flying.

Frank: Did you regret that?

Fris: Oh, yes. Yes, that's the one thing that I--

Frank: Well, of course, you kept your flight orders.

Fris: Yes, and then the only time, I guess, well, when I went to--when I came back from Korea, and then, well, as a matter of fact, when I was up there at Litton I just took two weeks leave and went down to El Toro for a refresher just on leave time so I'd get back to flying again, and then I flew somewhat there, but it was at El Toro. It was strictly flying airplanes just on ordinary hops, not under the weapons delivery or anything like that because that's the most fun of all, the weapons delivery thing. That's why I always said that, fighters are great and everything, but I'd go with the attack one any time because you're always doing something rather than just sitting up there orbiting or sitting on the end of the runway waiting to do something. But, no, I did. I've always regretted that particular portion because I didn't get to fly near as much as I would like to have.

Frank: Well, we've pretty well exhausted--let's see, how many years will we say, '43 to '75. That's 32 years.

Fris: Yes, yes, and I enjoyed every day of it, and I'm enjoying every day of retirement too.

Frank: What are you doing in retirement now?

Fris: Well, mostly hunting and fishing.

Frank: But you have no--

Fris: I have a consulting contract a couple of days a month with one of these ECM outfits, and then I just signed on to one over here. There's some outfit over here in, well, in Tysons Corner, that wants to get into doing studies for the Marine Corps, and they've asked several of us to work with them on like a murderboard. When they get a study together, then they're going to present it to this particular group and get their comments and what have you, so I said, "Yeah, I'll go ahead and work with you on that," so, but it's--I--about the second year after I was out I did a little more consulting, but it started interfering with my hunting and fishing, so I cut it down. I said, I can't--and fortunately, I lucked out in the Marine Corps, so I don't need a job. Paying-wise the retirement for the wife and I--the kids are all gone on their own and everything, so I'm enjoying now the things that I always wanted to enjoy and wasn't able to, so--

Frank: Great.

Fris: I made out real well.

Frank: Well, I want to thank you very much. Enjoyed it.

Fris: Sure thing. Thank you. I enjoyed it too.

Frank: Great.

Fris: Sitting here and talking about--and some of the things keep coming back, you know, you--

Frank: Well, when you get the transcript and have a chance to add on, you can do it at that time.

Fris: Yes, okay.

Frank: Very good.

End Tape 2, Side 2

End of Interview

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