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MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM.

Interview with General Alfred H. NOBLE, USMC (Ret.)

Interviewed by Major L.E. Tatem, USMC

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Place: At the General's home in La Jolla, Calif.

Session I - 20 May 1968

Tape 1, Side 1

Gen. Noble: Can you erase anything?

Q: Yes, sir, you can erase anything you like. You can go back and erase it.

Well, sir, it's been two or three days since the last time we spoke. One of the first questions I'd like to ask the General is to digress just a little bit, perhaps, from the written script we have there, and have the General tell me again about how he first heard about the Marine Corps and first came in.

Gen. Noble: Well, ^Tthe first I ever knew about the Marine Corps was about 1914 when I was going to St John's College in Annapolis. The Naval Academy had a ^MMarine barracks there and I got to know a few of the officers, including the late Gen. Dunlap. And the ^{B Robert}Marines ^{Proved}lived so smart that they got quite a fine reputation with the military college students.

That's about the first I ^{knew} ~~heard~~ of the Marine Corps, but I never thought seriously of joining until after the ~~first~~ ^{World} War had been declared on April 7th 1917. Then most of our students -- certainly those in the graduating classes -- were anxious to get in the services, ⁱⁿ some ~~sort~~ ^{way}, and a great proportion of them did. Some went in the Army, ~~and~~ some in the Navy Supply Corps, and some in the Marine Corps. I was among those who chose the Marine Corps. We had that option. That's about the beginning of things. And I stayed in for 40 years less two months, I think. (laughs)

Q: Yes, sir, you did. You were pushing 40 years when you finally decided to quit.

Noble: I didn't decide. It was a statutory requirement that I quit. I didn't want to quit, as a matter of fact I think 62 ^{years of age} in many cases is a little early. It used to be 65. I thought ^{for a long} ~~at the~~ time that was a little late. At different times you have different points of view.

You want me to go on from there?

Q: Would you please, sir. You've ^{my} ~~got~~ ~~much~~ script over there.

Noble: I note that the first thing mentioned in this script is the early years, particularly with the Maryland National Guard. I was in the Maryland National Guard for three months. In the spring of 1916 I had had two years at St. John's College, which ^{was} ~~is~~ a very strict military college, and one of the big ten in the country at that time, ~~and that~~ ^{military} training was sort of culminated by my three months of service in the First Maryland Infantry, which had been called into federal service for duty on the Mexican border, while Gen. ^{John V.} Pershing

invaded Mexico to capture the Mexican bandit Pancho Villa. You remember Pancho Villa had previously invaded the United States and captured El Paso. ~~He raised quite a ruckus down there.~~

Q: He raised quite a ruckus down there.

Noble: Yes. The United States was ^{quite} ~~pretty~~ sensitive at that time as to her territory, and they ~~were~~ rather prompt in taking retaliatory measures -- it didn't make any difference whether it was a bandit or an enemy army. Actually Pancho was after all nothing more than a sort of ~~an~~ ignorant bandit. Later on they told him that he was a very righteous revolutionary fighting for the right. Actually, I think he was fighting for pesos.

I was recruited at St John^s -- as were many other students. And all of us were formed into the regimental machine gun company of the First Maryland Infantry, and were told -- and I think it's true -- that that was the first packmule machine gun company ever formed in the National Guard. I believe the regular army ^{already} had a few of those companies. We were armed with Benet-Mercier machine guns, which were really not as good as the first Colt machine guns; ~~I don't think~~ -- they jammed if ~~to~~ you blew your breath on them, almost.

For those three months down on the Mexican border I was a combination of a mule nurse and a machine gunner, and rose to the rank of corporal. Then in the fall I came back to St John^s, and in early November I was discharged from the National Guard as a corporal and ~~went~~ ^{to} back, studying.

Q: In other words they just took you for the summer months?

Noble: They would have kept you indefinitely if you'd stayed with them, but we'd had a sort of gentleman's agreement that our education wouldn't be interfered with, if the duty were over in time.

Q: Did you happen to get over to Mexico while you were down there, or did you stay entirely in Texas?

Noble: No, we were stationed at Eagle Pass, and what we did mostly was guard the bridge over ^{the Rio Grande} from Eagle Pass to Piedras Negras, the Mexican town on the other side. The Mexican Federal Army was there on the other side, and they were protecting Mexico against us. And every night we'd both come out with our machine guns and sand bags, and they'd set theirs up on their end of the bridge, and we'd set ours up on our end, ^{then} ~~we~~ pointed the guns at each other all night long, and stopped all traffic. Then as the sun got a little hot in the morning, both ^{sides} ~~of us~~ moved underneath the bridge, and called the whole thing off till it got cool around sundown! That went on the whole hot summer down there! And we had some rather strenuous hikes. I remember one of them. I think we went from ^{Eagle Pass} ~~El Paso~~ ^{to} Laredo. ^{It} was dead summer, and the ^{sun} ~~heat~~ was very hot indeed, and ~~that~~ was by far the most soldiering I'd ever done. But that was about the end of it.

Then the next spring, of course, on April 7th the United States and Germany went to war, and on the 9th I took my physical examination for the Marine Corps in Washington, D.C. I remember that the surgeon was very gruff -- a naval surgeon -- and ~~he gave me my physical examination,~~ and I was very nervous about it. He had these balls of yarn to test my color vision, and I missed some of them, and ~~I~~ thought I'd flunked the whole course, and the only thing he said finally was,

"Congratulations, you are going in a fine corps!" [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Then within a month the Marine Corps ordered all of us down to the Officers' School at Parris Island, that had just been organized. Down there we all got together -- I think it was either one or two companies -- and drilled on the parade ground. The school was under the command of a ^{George} Capt. Messersmith, assisted by then 1st Lt. George Stowell. We got to know each other, ^{and} ~~we~~ were taught ^{close} ~~how~~ to drill, ^{order} [REDACTED] how to wear the uniform, and courtesies ^{of} to the service. I remember one of the first things we had to do was to dress up in our new whites, take our calling cards we'd just had printed and go call on the commanding officer of Parris Island, very formally to leave cards. ^{Colonel Maxwell of course} ~~He~~ wasn't home, ^{as} ~~of course~~, he didn't want to see all of us, and we were very much relieved [REDACTED] (laughs)

Q: I don't think that's changed too much right today! (laughter)

Noble: Probably not. Then the next thing [REDACTED] was that we were transferred in about a month or so up to Quantico, Virginia. At that time Quantico was just being built. It was all mud, they were cutting down trees on the hill -- practically a forest there -- and putting up these temporary barracks. We moved into one of them, and it was the deepest, thickest mud I've ever seen. It was terrific. Trunks couldn't get down -- all that mud!

We stayed there in an officers' school in which Gen. ^(then Captain) ~~Philip~~ Torrey had one company, ^(then Captain) ~~and~~ Gen. ^{Charlie} Barrett had another company, and Gen. Mandy Lee ^{had another} [REDACTED] (I think that was his name. He was a captain) [REDACTED] and we stayed there for a while in that class, doing the same sort of training. Then they formed [REDACTED] of the 6th Marines.

I went with four other lieutenants over and joined to make up the lieutenants of the company -- of the 83rd Company, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines. We got to know our men there a little bit -- not much -- and then in November we went to Philadelphia and got on a transport for France.

Q: Before you went up to Philadelphia, did you have much of an opportunity to do any field training with the troopers? You said you got to know them a little bit. Was this the result of having some field training with them?

Noble: Yes, we did. A limited amount, of course, and I don't exactly recall how long it was. I would say about a month to two months.

Q: That's kind of a short period.

Noble: Very short.

Q: The enlisted men in the company were brand new recruits, weren't they? Right out of Parris Island?

Noble: Yes, most of them. There were a few old non commissioned officers, but not many.

Q: Do you happen to remember the names of any of the fellow officers who were in the Officers' School with you?

Noble: Oh, I would remember most of them if ^{our group} I had ~~their~~ photograph here. We had a big photograph. The one ⁱⁿ my company -- the 83rd ^{6th Marines} Company -- were 1st Lt. Murphy (I forget what his first name was); and Louis F. Timmerman, who now lives in New York, and ^{Allan} McRossey, also a New Yorker ~~████████████████████~~; Holliday, who was, I believe, a graduate of ^{the} Citadel. He was wounded. Can't think of the other ones. (Pause) Oh, David I. Garrett, younger brother of Maj. Garrett in the Marine Corps. I believe he was from Louisiana; he later became a judge. I think that's about all. The captain of the company was Albert R. Sutherland, a regular officer, and the battalion commander was ^{Walter} Burton W. Sibley, nicknamed "Ma" Sibley. We called him Ma because he was so considerate of his men. It was said he went around and tucked ~~them~~ them in every night. He almost did! (laughter)

Q: When you went to Philadelphia to embark for France, did you ride over on a commercial ship or was it naval shipping? What type of transport was it?

Noble: The USS Van Steuben. That was the German line, the Hamburg-American Line ship that we seized from the Germans and made ^{into} an American transport. ~~████████████████████~~ Actually it was a transatlantic liner.

We ran into the Agamemnon, another one on the way over. We'd just got into the submarine zone and we were zigzagging, and here is the Agamemnon, and we zagged when we should have zigged, and we whanged into each other. Took all the guns off the side of the ship and destroyed all the lifeboats that were swung out, and ^{listed} ~~lifted~~ the ship over one side and frightened everybody almost dead! We thought we were torpedoed. ~~████████████████████~~ It was at night, and we were very nervous.

Q: I can readily understand that.

Noble: I remember Timmerman -- he was the officer of the day, and our sentries were way down in the hold, in the deep hold, and right after this crash, he thought it his duty to inspect sentries, so he began to scramble around over the ship to find the sentries and see what they were doing, and he got down in this dark hole. Meanwhile there were no lights, [REDACTED] And he said, "Sentry, are you here?" And he heard click, click, click. The sentry was presenting arms! He never forgot it. (laughs heartily)

But we did have very good discipline -- tremendously good discipline. All the officers were almost in awe of the regular officers, and the enlisted men, they moved fast when any officer said anything to them. The line between officers and enlisted men in those days was very strictly held to, every little detail was insisted upon by all the seniors. And that carried [REDACTED] very strongly [REDACTED] right through the whole ^{organization} thing. There was not very much informality except among the officers and among the enlisted men after duty was over. Not too informal, not in our outfit. No ~~xxxx~~ calling anybody by their first names at all. Everybody went by their title. The lieutenants went by the title of Mister. They even called each other Mister.

Q: Is that right?

Noble: Officially, in front of the men.

Q: I guess we've got a different breed of cat now, General.

Noble: Oh I don't know if the cat is any different, it's just being ~~fed~~ a little differently. Actually it all comes out about the same in the end.

Q: I think it does, I really do.

Noble: As far as I can see it does in the Marine Corps. I don't know about other services. They might get a little sloppy, and when the chips are down they might not be quite as prompt in obeying as they were in the old days.

Q: The people who are coming back from Vietnam now say these are the best ~~Marines~~ Marines they've ever served with. This is what they said in Korea, this is what they said in World War II, and I suspect it was the same thing also during World War I.

Noble: Oh yes, we were the best that had ever been up to that *time* (laughter). I believed it too. Actually I don't believe there is very much difference. It's the same amount of courage at one time as another. Same amount of loyalty at one ~~to~~ time as another. I admit that there is a lot more technique now, and people get much better training and there is much more opportunity for training now than there was in the old days. In the old days you didn't have much opportunity, no place to train, no equipment to train with, and when you moved somewhere you didn't go organized; they just grabbed marines from everywhere and they all met en route. And you got together and scrambled the best you could. That was the Marine Corps up to World War I, definitely. World War I really was the turning point *from the old to* of the

modern Marine Corps; that's what made the modern Marine Corps. We got a reputation then that we never had before. We got an international reputation, a European reputation, and a reputation in America. Before, the people who had ever heard of the marines admired them as a sort of military naval policeman, and that's about all they knew about them. There were so few ~~and~~ they were practically an unknown quantity outside of the Navy, and they ~~was~~ were not particularly regarded at that time as a great military force, which they weren't. They'd get together as companies sometimes in insurrections, in *Banana Wars*. Battalions maybe. I don't know how many regiments they ever had, if any. Perhaps. But it was definitely a small time force, [REDACTED] and the officers were not well trained ^{militarily}. But World War I put a different picture on the whole thing, and we did become an organized force, and we did operate as an army brigade, and we did do a little something else besides guard duty and sort of banana warring. We were against ~~the~~ first class ~~war~~ power for the first time, I guess. From then on the Marine Corps began to go forward very fast, and it wasn't long ^{after the war} before the Fleet Marine Force was organized.

Q: You went across to France on the Van Steuben. Where about did you land in France?

Noble: Brest. And from Brest we went down to Bordeaux and camped in a French encampment there. I personally had charge of a working party every day ^{and} that went down to the ^A Bassin docks to oversee the loading and unloading of ships, and there I met the first Vietnamese (I guess you'd call 'em). The French brought them over and used them

as switching engines ; they put their shoulders to the boxcars and pushed them around the yard. And ~~That's~~ that's what they did, and they lived in the worst kind of squalor and mud, just like animals. It impressed me very much. It was the dirtiest, muddiest, sloppiest place, I think that I've ever seen. ^(except Quantico) We stayed there during a good deal of the winter of 1918, then in the middle of it -- I forget when it was, about January or February I guess -- we moved to a little town called Chaumont-la-Ville in France; that's where we did our training. There was snow on the ground most of the time. We were billeted in that little town, and got to know some of the French. Then in the spring of 1918 we went up to the Marbache sector. I notice it doesn't show here. It shows it here as Aisne-Marne. Perhaps that was the large thing. Actually they called it the Marbache sector, which was the old Verdun sector. My company became a garrison ~~in~~ to Fort Du Rosillier, one of the forts of Verdun. It was a typical French fort that defended Verdun. We went through a period of trench warfare. Trenches had been dug by the French and occupied for about four years, and they were complete, with dugouts 40 feet deep and shelters not quite so deep, with ~~xxxxx~~ escarpments, duck boards, all the luxuries of home. That was typical of World War I until the time we got in it. ~~That trench warfare there~~ had been stalemated for a long time, right across Europe. And a great deal of artillery. ^{was employed} Of course in certain places over Vietnam they've had a tremendous amount of continuous shelling recently, but up to that time -- all World War II and Korea -- actually the artillery had been ^{Comparatively weak.} missing. The artillery of World War I was something that ^{has been} ~~was~~ almost unknown since. Vietnam is bringing it out, like in that village -- it wasn't Danang . . .

Q: Dong Ha? Con Thien?

Noble: Con Thien. I think they got it continuously there and they had to go underground.

Q: Oh yes, sir, and up at Khe Sanh. They ^{have} ~~had~~ gone underground practically all the way across. They have had to.

Noble: You do if you have much artillery.

Q: Yes sir. Another thing, they've got those rockets and the mortars. I was speaking to a ~~young~~ young captain just this morning, who had just come back from Vietnam, and he was saying that at the airfield of Danang and at Chu Lai, you used to go back there, it was almost like being at home. But he says lately they've been receiving rockets and it isn't too good.

Noble: Of course what I am thinking about mainly, though, wasn't casual shelling, not harassing (what we call harassing). It was bombardments, and that's what gets on your nerves.

Q: The bombardment is only taking place right up along the DMZ.

Noble: I am really speaking of bombardment. We were very well educated on bombardment because they laid those ^{danger} ~~things~~ down, and every time they finished you'd go up and you wouldn't see any virgin soil at all that hadn't been plowed up all around you. And the noise and the flying of the stuff around, you just had to dig under it, and even if you did it got on your nerves terrifically.

They used to have bombardments that lasted as long as 24 hours in some of those places.

Q: Didn't the Germans follow this up with an attack or something?

Noble: They did if they were going to make a ^{big} push in that particular place, otherwise they wouldn't, they just harassed each other. There were certain quiet sectors so-called, and even those quiet sectors had shelling now and then, every night, practically, they'd shell you, but not heavy barrages. Sometimes they'd drop a shell about every five minutes and let it go and then come in again in 15 minutes or a half hour, enough to keep ^{you awake and worried.} ~~where you were.~~ At other times they'd vary it by banging down with a whole battery at a time in some one place they'd found. But they wouldn't shoot for destruction; that was just harassment. I don't know what good it did, really, except to keep up the morale of the gunners that were doing the shooting. I myself thought it was an awful lot of shells wasted. And it was. But nobody economized on taxpayers' money at the ^{front} ~~time~~, did they?

Q: No.

Noble: [REDACTED]

They just said, "It's up to somebody else to get the ammunition to us." They don't budget it much.

Q: I suspect you had a lot of rebuilding to do after one of these bombardments in order to get your trenches back in shape.

Noble: Not a great deal. They'd knock in certain parts, but not much. A trench is pretty hard to fill up with shells. They'd knock a little in but not a great deal, and we'd get it fixed the next day.

The worst thing we had then that they haven't had since is gas. In that sector I had a platoon -- I forget how many were gassed, it was 60-some out of a . . . well, it was more than a platoon, because I think that's about the strength of a platoon -- and we had about 60-some gassed at one time in one location, and that happened in about 20 minutes of shelling, mustard gas, and they all had to be evacuated. And they'd harass us all over the trails or the trenches we used to go and get food and things at night. That was part of the harassment -- a gas shell now and then. Maybe one or two shells; it left its odor around, left a little gas floating around that made you stop; you wouldn't want to walk through it if it were mustard, you had to climb out and walk around it some way, with your gas mask on because you couldn't stand breathing too much of that stuff. And it slowed things up. And also it was frightening, as gas always was. They haven't used it since. In a way I thought it was a pity because if you are equipped with it it's one of the most humane things you can use. You make people sick and you may even cripple them, but you don't kill as many, you don't blow people apart. Usually they get over it.

Q: It's really a contradiction, isn't it, that we don't use it -- I mean the reasons offered for not using gas are a kind of contradiction with the facts, because as you say, at least they aren't being blown apart.

Noble: Well, I think the reason we don't use it is because it is a terror ^{it produces} weapon and ~~it's~~ ^{fear of} retaliation. That's the main reason, in my opinion. I think that's the main reason why we won't drop atomic bombs. We are not likely to. ^{fear of} ~~xxxx~~ retaliation. Matter of fact, this ^{fear of} ~~xxxx~~ retaliation has been the biggest peace keeper in the history of the human race.

Q: Yes, it has!

Noble: ~~_____~~

~~_____~~ ^{Fear of retaliation} prevents also wars being fought in many cases ~~and~~ individually, You ^{may} feel like hitting somebody and you probably would, except he is a little bigger than you are and you think he might hit you a little harder than you could hit him. So you don't hit him. And he may feel the same way: he looks at you and doesn't hit you. You don't see many street fights with people slugging it out. They just don't do it, they ~~pull~~ push each other and yell at each other, but it's rather rare to have people stand up and fight each other with bare fists. Very rare. For fear of retaliation.

Well, I am getting off the track, am I not? You are not running out of film?

Q: No, we've got lots of that!

Noble: I always feel like I should economize a little bit. Let's see

I just about wound up all I can remember of the Verdun sector, the Marbache sector. But it got us into working shape. We knew how to deploy, we knew how to use our communications, and we knew how to dig in and how to shoot, and so forth. And we did patrol, and even

patrolled the enemy's trenches at night and cut through their wire, and things of that sort, and we set machine guns up to try to catch them -- automatic weapons. We were using the French Chauchat, by the way, an automatic rifle. That was another jammer: if you could get through a clip without jamming you were good! I know the Germans had the Maxim, and it was so much better than the Chauchat -- the Maxim was a "light" machine gun and ~~it~~ was water-cooled; it was heavy, but they seemed to lug it around wherever they wanted to, ^{It could} shoot continuously ^{by belt} and very fast, and our Chauchat would just go pum, pum, pum, pum, jam! ~~_____~~. Right before the end we did get ^{some Brownings that were} ~~_____~~ so much better. ~~_____~~

~~_____~~ Some of the new units would come adjacent to us armed with ^{the Browning} ~~_____~~ and our people would go over ~~_____~~ and steal them, hijack them.

Then we came out of there, and I believe that's the time I was sent to school. It's mentioned here. It was a new school set up by the Army over there, called the Army Infantry Specialty ^{ists} School at Fort Plenois, an old French fort. Everything was very crude, but we had lectures on the latest things, including what German words to use to make them surrender and so forth. Also patrol formations, and a lot of lectures on everything we ought to know that they'd learned during years of trench ~~of~~ warfare. We were very much novices; all Americans were at that time; we'd had no experience at all, and all the French officers and men, and the British and the rest of them were military snobs as far as we were concerned. They felt that they had to tell us things, and almost felt we should be put under their command. And we would all have been under their command if it hadn't been for ^{General} Pershing, who held out. He was very firm about that. But

at first we were under French command for quite a while. High command. Our division was.

While I was in that sector, Capt. Sutherland went back to school. I rejoined, and I fell heir to the company. I kept ^{command of} the company as a first lieutenant until I was made a captain next August. Then I kept it as a captain until we came back home. So I stayed with the same company all the time and I commanded it ^{practically} all the time. I was one of the few people that did that. I don't know of anybody else that did.

[REDACTED] I thought it was luck. I think the only reason I got the company at all was because I happened to be the senior and I had had more military experience than any of the other officers that had come in, and that gave me a head start on them all the time. I knew the answers to most things and they didn't. That made me show up very smart. I'd been under pretty strict discipline at ^{St. John's} [REDACTED] and I knew what discipline was, and I applied it. And my battalion commander was satisfied with me, so I just kept ^{the company} it, and I felt very proud. [REDACTED]. Actually, I've been essentially a company commander ever since. I got to be a major, a lieutenant colonel and so forth, on up, but when I get to thinking about the fighting on the front line, I always ^{think} ~~felt~~ like a company commander. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] from the viewpoint of a company commander -- actual fighting, actual shooting, opposing other people -- what the men will do, what they won't do, what they have to do, what they are up against, I ~~do~~ always think of companies, because at that time I used to say that the company commander was the one ^{who} ~~that~~ won ^{or} ~~and~~ lost a war. The company commander. A battalion commander is too far out

of the picture, and he ^{has} ~~had~~ ^{limited} very little influence. And of course the regimental commander and all the rest of them, they were farther out of the picture, and the only way they ^{can} ~~could~~ influence ^{is} ~~was~~ to deploy and support and move reserves around. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] That's not ~~as~~ quite as true now, I don't think, as it was then, because of communications. As a matter of fact, the poor ^{modern} company commander can't get out of sight of a dozen or so bosses that are talking to him all the time, it seems to me. But at that time they really left us alone. You were given a job, and nobody was anywhere near you, and you couldn't even talk to them. You might ^{have} wanted to get some advice, you ^{might have} wanted somebody to lean ^{on} over for moral support, but you couldn't. Of course that happens now, but I do think that communications are so ^{effective} ~~much~~ now that a good deal of time is probably spent in communicating.

Q: There is. There's a tremendous amount of time . . .

^{Of course,}
Noble: ~~At~~ that's the guess of somebody who's not over there now, but I'll bet you that there's an awful lot of time wasted down ^{on} the line by young people having to communicate and report and everything else. I don't mean calling in air support or artillery. We would have liked to have done that. [REDACTED]



But having some commander, your boss, looking over your shoulder all



the time asking you what you are going to do next, and why aren't you doing this, and "explain this to me", there you are, stuttering and stammering, trying to convince the old man that you are doing all right, that you are doing the best you can! I think that's terrible!

Q: It makes it rough, it really does.

Noble: I don't know how it is, I'm just guessing.

Q: I think you are guessing pretty close to the heart of the matter!

Noble: Actually I imagine the higher commanders soon learn that young people --  are the ones they can trust to go ahead and do things, and keep their mouth ^{shut} and leave them alone, and ^{which} ~~the~~ ones they'd better look out for, to keep asking them, keep prodding them or something. 

Q: One of the problems they are having over there now in line with us about knowing their people, is the fact that in World War I and World War II and in Korea basically the units stayed together. If you were in a company within a battalion, you generally stayed with that battalion, and that battalion generally stayed with that regiment, and that regiment generally stayed with . . . This isn't the case now: they've got all kinds of swapping going on over there, and really it's difficult to trace a company or whom they were actually working for, because they are really trading off around there

Noble: You mean, setting up task ^{forces} ~~guard divisions~~ all the time.

Q: Yes, sir, and a lot of times the regimental people are cut completely out of the picture, and they are superimposing these task forces over top level, and absorbing the command that way. So it's a problem, it really is.

Noble: ~~That~~ That has one morale drawback that I can see. A unit has a hard time taking credit for something well done.

Q: This is very true, very true.

Noble: And they probably don't get the credit for things that they ought to get. And people fight for credit, you know.

Q: Yes sir, I think everyone wants recognition when they do something ~~and when they do it~~ right, because they know very well that if they do something wrong they are going to hear about it.

Noble: Of course they want recognition. Not only that, they want praise. Not only that, they want decoration.

Q: It's the name of the game.

Noble: Sure it is. And if it's necessary, there's court martial.

Q: During your tour in France, General, you didn't spend all your time in this particular sector of the Verdun sector, did you?

Noble: Oh no. I don't know how long we were there, but I don't think we were there over a month or so. Then I went to school for about a month and came back just in time. Then we were ordered up suddenly to the Aisne-Marne, which was up in the vicinity of Château Thierry.

We went in "camions" (that's French trucks). Their truck companies came and got us. They had everything for the movement of troops in trucks. ^{except pneumatic tires} And we rode in those ^{trucks} until our kidneys . . . all night long, it was terrible, I remember. We got out and could hardly walk. Backaches, oh boy, I remember to this day. Everybody.

We got out. We hit the Paris-Metz road, and then turned in the direction of Metz [REDACTED] and nobody knew exactly where the Germans were. There were refugees ^{streaming} down that road -- French refugees, families, pigs, children, everybody, mixed up with French soldiers, who were highballing it to the West. And we were through them. Nobody knew ^{where} the Germans were. The French would just say, "En bas" and so forth, and shake their hands like this and away they would go. You couldn't get any of them to talk. So we marched down there for quite a while and ~~came~~ came to a place called Triangle Farm, where we turned to the left (somebody said to turn to the left, and so we did). Somebody must have been looking out because they said, "Go-find-them" "Good you found them. Our battalion is going till we meet them head on." And we did. We saw about where they were, we heard a machine gun or something. They'd outrun their artillery -- the Germans had. They'd been chasing the French so much. The French had left their artillery, and the Germans had left theirs, and they were running like rabbits! I forget how many miles they'd come in three days. I don't see how they could move that fast. We heard a few machine guns. Then we stopped in the woods, and we

^{my company}
 were given a sector right away. ^{wooded} We got into a little platoon area, as I remember, and ~~that~~ properly got shelled that night. Two or three guns the Germans had brought up, and they apparently had seen we were in there, so they got a few shells in on us. Then I believe two days later we felt each other out, and then came June 7th when we went into Belleau Woods and cleaned them out. They had gotten in there and very fast had organized into interlocking machine guns ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ⁱⁿ the woods, and they shot on sound, not on sight. They didn't see us and we didn't see them at first. That was the first experience we had of anything like that. The woods didn't seem to stop the bullets one bit. They opened up with those Maxims at crossfire. As soon as we made a sound, of course . . . ~~troops~~ ^{troops} attacking do make sounds.

Our artillery hadn't caught up to us yet, so we went in just barehanded and we got slaughtered, we really did. I don't mean to boast, but my company -- or one platoon of my company, we joined that platoon that night -- was the only company that got its objective that first day and sat on it. The rest of them were thrown back, but we had one platoon that ^{clipped up to the objective} ~~clipped up~~. It was Timmerman's platoon, by the way. And we got way up there and the Germans got in back of us, so we were in a hole up there. But that was just the beginning, and we just kept ^{at} tacking in that woods and kept losing ^{men} ~~them~~. I forget how many we did lose -- several thousands, I don't know, if

It was a big battle, and it really roared. An awful lot of shooting, and some mortars, and later on some artillery. But at first it was mainly machine guns and rifles. We were in the open and they were concealed, and they were Prussian guards and didn't give up easily. And the ^M ~~Marines~~ -- we'd have gone into anything, we didn't care how much it was, never stopped at all until we were just decimated, and we just couldn't go any further.

It was a reckless thing to do in a way. If I were to do it today I wouldn't have attacked that place head on at all. I would have outflanked it because it was a strong point and we should have found it out. But we hit it head on and never stopped. The only thing our officers knew was, "Go ahead and fight 'em and kill 'em, damn it! Straight ahead, what are you waiting for?" And we were more afraid of ^{our senior officers} ~~of them~~ than we were of the Germans. It was a pretty bad business.

However, it did have this effect on the Marine Corps; it showed us up as being very stubborn fighters and we got a lot of respect we could never have gotten otherwise from the Germans. Immediately their intelligence called us an élite corps, gave us a nickname. ~~The~~ ~~French~~ -- ~~We~~ had blocked their whole advance, really, on Paris, they never got a step further.

Q: They all stopped except the last German offense on Paris . . .

Noble: And of the war.

Q: Pretty soon after this the war actually ceased, didn't it?

Noble: Yes, they never went forward again in any real push. We went from here directly to the battle of Soissons, and there we hit the hinge, the base of the salient that they had just made. We stopped ~~there~~ ^{at} Belleau Woods, and then we went up back along the line, and cut into the base of the salient, at Soissons. And that was an attack straight in through some wheat fields, all in the open. And we got artillery there, because they had been there for a while, and we got a lot of machine gun fire, and we lost quite a few men. Of course

there wasn't any way to go at them except straight through that wheat. The wheat was up to the waist, and I imagine there was the same feeling about going through that wheat as there was in Vietnam going through water, you know, up to your waist! You go down and nobody sees you go down! And it's a helpless feeling: you say, "If I get hit I am likely to stay hit, right here." That was the trouble about wheat -- people just disappeared in it, and ^{were} ~~may not be~~ stumbled on ^{there} ~~to~~ until they bled to death. However, ~~it~~ ^{there} was two days of that, and that was too much for the Germans. They started pulling out of that salient as fast as they could pull out. That was the end of that.

Then we shifted over to the right, and [REDACTED] went into the Champagne sector [REDACTED] that chalky sector, and had quite a battle up there. Then we shifted ^{over to the right} ~~over~~ in the direction of St. Mihiel, and that's where we joined up with the big ^{American} Army push in the Argonne. That was the biggest push I'd ever seen. I remember getting up on a hill, and as far as I could see to the right and to the left ~~it~~ ^{country} was open ~~company~~ and as far to the rear as I could see there was nothing but men and equipment moving/deployed across the country like a bunch of locusts, [REDACTED] I thought I could see about three quarters of a mile in most directions if not farther. And they were all around, just moving forward. I remember my first sergeant saying, "Looks like nothing could stop that movement. ^{but} Just a few thin lines of machine guns [REDACTED] spread right along in front can stop the first ones and that'll stop the whole business." Which it would! (laughs) Would stop it cold, ~~it~~ ^{It} wouldn't take very much to stop it, really, if somebody stayed there long enough and had enough ammunition.

But anyway, ^{the American advance} that went right on up, and that lasted until the armistice was signed. At Soissons I was evacuated as soon as that was over. I thought I was sick or something, or too tired to walk. Actually I had influenza with a very high fever, and I went back with the casualties. We were put on a train, went back to Paris and ~~were~~ transferred to a hospital. Then we went to Nantes; that's where the hospital was for recovery. I stayed unconscious and ^{the attendants} I thought I had died one night, but I didn't, obviously. But they wouldn't let any-
^{one} body get out; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I was up and around and my unit was moving around, ^{at the front} and I got itchy feet, so I got in with the Red Cross driver -- a Red Cross man who had a truck -- who was going to Paris. So I went ADL from the hospital to Paris, stayed there two days and got on a train, and bummed my way and rejoined my outfit! Nobody asked any questions at all. As long as you were going in ^{the} that direction toward the front nobody'd stop you, even on trains, ~~or anywhere~~. But coming back the MPs would get you every time if you were going along and your orders weren't right. I didn't have any orders at all. Completely absent ^{without} on leave. (laughs) I wouldn't do that again for anything.

Q: I don't know about that, General.

Noble: (still laughing) ^{at the time} I thought it was a very good thing to do ~~myself~~. But I got back, and I got back just in time to join in on the very end of the St Mihiel thing. Somebody else had had my company in the meantime -- it was about two weeks, I think -- and I was afraid I wouldn't get it back. But I got it back right away. ^{Louis} Jones, who was later a brigadier general in the Marine Corps, was in my company

as number two, and he had command of it during most of the St Mihiel thing. He hated to see me come back.

[redacted] After the armistice -- I won't go into the old hard feeling we had about being ordered by the Army Corps commander to cross the Meuse River after he knew that the armistice was going to be signed immediately. He did, and at that time we were wild, all of us, from private on up to all of us, because some of our units [redacted] were ordered across [redacted] the Meuse River that very night and then the armistice stopped everything at 11 o'clock in the morning, and we were waving at the Germans. Then ^{we went} [redacted] down and look at our casualties all over the place. And we called it an unnecessary slaughter. I talked to ^{General Sumner several years later} [redacted]

[redacted], when he was the president of the Citadel. He was telling me the reasons which were logical to him,

[redacted] that although the ^A armistice was about to be signed he thought the pressure should be kept on until the thing was absolutely complete. I never saw it that way. The thing was going to happen anyway, and we were there to prevent ^{the Germans} their coming across. ^{the river} I still think it was an unnecessary action. Once in a while ^{in war} you see unnecessary actions, ^{but} and I don't blame ^{the leaders} [redacted] if they have a good reason to do it at the time with the information they have. [redacted]

[redacted] (Pause)

After the Armistice

Then ~~we~~ gathered together and marched through the lower part of Belgium ^{to} the Rhine River into Germany, where my company occupied part of the east bank of the Rhine and a town called Leutensdorf. We were ^{to be} billeted with the Germans, and just before Christmas 1918 I landed at my billet with an architect ^{and his family}; ~~we~~ ^{who} he lived in a rather nice house with his wife and three daughters; he had a son in the German Army who came sneaking around about a week later -- afraid I was going to capture him, I suppose, and make him prisoner of war. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We needed a place to put a mess hall on the side of ^{the} those hills where the vineyards were. The best place I could see was right where the vineyard was, and I said, "There is nothing there but a few grapes, tear 'em up and we'll put the mess hall there." That was a vineyard that had been very carefully planted and nursed for I don't know how many years, and it was a very valuable piece of property, and nobody was consulted. We just pulled up the grapes and built one of these mess halls on it. And I happened to be living with the man who owned this, and he didn't hold it against me at all. In fact he came out and he helped on how to build the drainage from the galley. I hope he got his money for it, because he certainly did take it like a soldier! I didn't know you were supposed to take it up with anybody, and we didn't. Nobody came after me about it at all. I suppose the German people had to pay their own people for their loss.

Q: I don't know how that worked out.

Noble: I think they did. I think they have a claim on their own government for loss suffered as a result of enemy action. Personal

property is usually settled that way. They may not get all of it, but the government will usually give them eventually what it was worth.

Q: How long were you on occupation duty, General?

Noble: From December 1918 until -- I think -- July 1919, when we came back. I thought we became very friendly with the German population. We tried to treat them fair. I remember we didn't allow our people to use any local meat. They had such little meat during the whole war, and we got our regular meat brought up to us. Our people liked to go and buy ^{it} locally and pay big money for it or go out and shoot something and bring it in, buy a pig or something. I know our non commissioned officers had gotten hold of a pig, and were going to have roast pig. I remember I got word of it, and I went in there just before the mess, where they had all gathered, and there was this roast pig, and right before the whole ^{assembly} ~~company~~ I said, "Let's have that pig, and take it right outside and dump it right in the garbage." The whole pig. They'd been smacking their mouths about that for a long time. [REDACTED] You could have heard a pin drop. So they didn't get any more fresh ^{German} meat after that. For years I've seen some of those people every now and then, and they'd laugh about that pig! It got to be funny after about ten years! (laughs heartily)

Q: After ten years, I should say . . .

Noble: But at the time, Oh, boy!

Q: What was the nature of your occupation duties?

Noble: Just to be in readiness. We were deployed, you know, really, by units, by battalions, all across that whole line of the Rhine. There was a demilitarized zone at various places: one half moon ~~area~~ around Coblenz, one around ~~Mann~~ ^{Mann} ~~and one around Düsseldorf~~, I think. The French had a sector, the British had a sector, and we had a sector. The German ^{military} were not supposed to come into that. If they did, we'd go after them, and they didn't. There was a little strain in relations there once when we had to go and man our perimeter, I remember. That was one of the things -- marching on and manning the perimeter. But the Germans immediately saw we meant business and gave way.

Meanwhile we just sat in the villages, drilled each day, got our uniforms in good shape, and the boys sort of made love to the maidens. When we left I remember (voice trails off)

Let's see now. Now we are back in the States, I guess, aren't we and World War I is over.

Q: Yes, sir.

Noble: It was a comparatively short war, we didn't do a terrific amount of fighting. It was severe, but it was new to the Marine Corps. New to the Army, as a matter of fact. We didn't have an Army that had known any fighting since the Civil War. Nobody in the Army had known anything about it, had hardly fired a hostile shot. We were really a green armed force. So was the Navy green, and the Navy didn't have much fighting during the war anyway. They had transport escort duty, and they had a little bit of anti-submarine

business, but never got into any ^{sizable} battle.

Q: When you came back to the States, was your company disbanded?

Noble: Yes. ^{After a march down Broadway,} We went to Quantico, and the company was disbanded and sent home. I disbanded the whole company myself, and gave discharge papers to every man. Then I found myself all of a sudden -- I put them on the train, I went down on the dock there and waved goodbye to all of 'em, the whole crowd of 'em on one train. All *free citizens*.

Q: And there you stood!

Noble: There I stood. Nobody but me! I remember at the time saying to myself, "This is really a dramatic moment." And I'd remind myself that it was really a dramatic moment, ^{that I should remember.} (laughs heartily)

Q: I imagine there were pangs of nostalgia there when you saw . . .

Noble: Oh, I felt like I was deserted. But then I went up to Baltimore and got married, and we immediately got on the SS Parana and sailed out of New York and ~~went down~~ to the Virgin Islands for my first duty.

World War I gave the Marine Corps another great advantage. Right after the war there were enough officers who had seen some fighting and had some idea about what it's all about and where the Marine Corps should be in the Armed Forces of the United States, what stance it should take, what sort of ~~the~~ fighting we should specialize in, and we started our schools. And it was from a

nucleus of people who fought over there that we got our instructors. That's where we were able to teach company officers, and that's the way the Marine Corps Schools were built up, and they became excellent schools from the beginning. Very hard working schools -- both the Company Officers' Course and the Field Officers' Course. And right away it began -- particularly led by the Schools ^{with hard work by} ~~and working by~~ ^{both instructors} ~~the officers~~ and students -- to evolve certain special doctrines, ways of doing things for ~~M~~ Marines in landing operations, and studying landing operations, particularly, in detail, like Gallipoli and the Japanese operations.

Q: I wonder, General, how -- the Marine Corps didn't make any landings in World War I -- how we got into this thinking and kind of got off, you might say, almost on a tangent, you know, the formulation of the Schools, and ~~forming~~ the study of -- er, I guess the British classify it as a disaster, Gallipoli.

Noble: It was. It was a disaster, and our army and their army and the French army were teaching in their schools, definitely, that landing operations from the sea were impractical, that movement from ship to shore was too risky a thing to attempt against any sizeable opposition, or any defensive area. Also, the Navy was convinced that naval guns with their flat trajectory were no good in support of ground troops -- they never had been. The reasons they hadn't been was they didn't have communications and their gunnery wasn't good enough; they didn't have enough coordination. That's the main reason. But there was this very strong misconception, both in our Navy and in our Army, about landing operations. Yet, we ~~M~~ Marines knew we were always ~~M~~ Marines, which is a part of the Navy. We knew we were

the army of the Navy. We knew that any war in the Pacific would require landing operations because you can't get there any other way. Logic just plain built up, and that logic was built up in the Schools. And the school had to, and the Marine Corps had to, from then on, over a period of a good many years, go to work as missionaries to convince the other services that that was true, and that landing operations was a specialty that had to be developed specially -- much more of a specialty than their river crossings were, for example. It had to be developed, and the Navy had to work in on it. And so then we started working out problems and sending teams to give these problems to the Navy War College. I was on the first team that went there. We took the students and staff of the Navy War College and we gave them ^a great long ^{problem involving} landing operations. And it was the Marine Corps that did the pressing all the time, otherwise there would never have been anybody to do anything, and there wouldn't have been any boats developed in the first place. We ^{sparked the development of} ~~developed~~ the boats, set up the demands for them, wrote the doctrine, sent it around to the Navy, had them write their comments on it, the captain of every ship and all the squadrons ^{commanders} and everything else from there on up. Then the board sat -- I was a member of the board -- to review (not only to write it and send it out, but to review it after it got back) ^{had} ~~to review it~~. It ^{had} been out a year. We took all their comments on it, and then wrote the doctrine.

End of Side 1, Tape 1, Session I.

Tape 1, Side 2 - Session I - 20 May 68

Q: Sir, in summing up your thoughts on World War I, I wonder if the General would comment some on the relationship we had with the Army. Some of their thinking -- in my reading on it I find that the Marine Corps was virtually left out; if the Army had had their way we may not even have gotten to France, and on top of that, once we got there they tried to keep the Marine Corps units separated so they couldn't fight as a cohesive unit, with their own commanders.

Noble: I didn't notice it so much in France. Of course I was pretty far down the line -- I was a company officer, ^{and} ~~because~~ we were brigaded in the ^{2nd} ~~1st~~ Army Division. The division was commanded by, first, an Army officer, and then later a ~~Marine~~ ^M officer.

Q: Yes, but don't you think that when ^{May John A.} ~~Gen.~~ Lejeune took over the division this was just a stroke of luck on our part? I mean, I don't think the Army had designed it that way at all.

Noble: Actually, I thought it was rather surprising that we did get a marine there in command of the division, because the other two infantry regiments were Army, also the artillery was Army, so the great bulk of the division was all Army, and I remember when a marine general got in command of it I thought that was a remarkable thing, and quite a feather in our cap. Why we got enough prestige at that particular time to be able to put a ~~Marine~~ ^M in command of it, or to get one accepted, I don't know. I don't know what the leverage was.

I'd be very interested to know myself. I'd like to think that the leverage was the fact that we had performed up to that time, ~~and~~ extremely well, and ^{that had} we pulled the irons out of the fire several times, ^{which gave us} ~~and we had gotten~~ quite an enviable reputation, among the French ~~and~~

~~_____~~
~~_____~~ Actually there was a great deal -- both before the war, during and after -- of service rivalry. And there should be service rivalry. I am all for competition. I think that any outfit that isn't rivalled by somebody else is going, probably, to slip a little downhill. It keeps everybody on their toes, and I am all for it. I was ~~_____~~ reluctant to agree with the amalgamation of the services that took place under the Secretary of Defense for that reason. And the ^MMarines, being ~~_____~~ an army of the Navy, dealt with both the Army and the Navy. They did an Army job which the Army was ~~_____~~ jealous of, and we also served aboard ship and did sometimes a Navy job that made the Navy a little bit jealous now and then. And being a minority size service -- a small service -- we of course were in for sniping from both the big giants, and that has happened since the history of the Marine Corps, I suppose, and I don't think it's ever going to stop. A big frog is never satiated. If he can eat a little frog he'll do it. And I don't mean to call the Army people frogs, or the Navy people frogs at all -- they are not frogs, they are very fine people. But the Marine Corps is going to expect rivalry, and they are going to expect other people trying to usurp their missions. First place, up at top side. Most of that takes place just in Washington, D.C. But that's not unusual. Every Department in Washington is going the same thing with every other Department.

Q: That's right!

Noble: So that's life. The only thing is, the little fellow's got to be very alert, he's got to know his business, and he's got to beat the other fellow to the punch. If he don't he's going to find himself absorbed sooner or later. I think the Marine Corps is a pretty big thing for anybody to try to swallow in these United States now, and to obliterate, because of the international and national reputation that it has throughout the ^{world,} ~~country~~. I don't believe the voting populace ^{in our country} would ever stand for the Marine Corps ever being played out of side too far. It is a buildup corps élite, and it has an advantage in the Armed Forces that you just can't gain overnight. And it's of great value for that reason alone to the Armed Forces of the United States. It can make fighting soldiers fast, I think faster than any other service. And they are real fighting forces. ^{They're} ~~They~~ set the style of fighting in practically every war we've had in my time. It did in World War I for the first big battle, and it made an example for other people to follow. It did in World War II, the first big example, something for everybody to follow -- which they did. It is a symbol, it's become a symbol, a very valuable thing for the Armed Forces as a whole. It shouldn't be played ^{down} ~~out~~ ~~the window~~, it shouldn't be wasted. I think the voter will understand that very well, if nobody else does.

Q: Thank you very much, General.

End of Side 2, Tape 1 - Session I.

Session II - 21 May 1968

Tape 1, Side 1

Q: General, let's start off today with your assignment to the Naval Ammunition Depot at Hingham, Massachusetts. I always manage to misspell the name of that State. Was there anything unusual at all in your assignment there, or would you just say that this was a normal marine barracks type of assignment, with normal associated duties and missions?

Noble: That's exactly what it was. In my own mind I put the assignment in the Virgin Islands, which just preceded this, and the marine barracks in Hingham, Massachusetts, in one lump. It amounted to a little over four years, and it was valuable to me as a whole because that's where I got my experience in administration, in post administration and command duties, which included discipline and a lot of direct dealings with the men for whom I was responsible, completely.

I also got experience that way in dealing with civilian officials [REDACTED] I look back quite often to those four years because although they were small commands, they were independent, more or less.

Q: This is a fine point you've made here, sir -- the fact that up until this time in your career you had been, fortunately for yourself, in the position of the commander most of the time, which I think is real nice -- the fact that in practically your entire tour in France you had been the commanding officer of the rifle company. This is something. There aren't too many young officers coming along today that can claim this.

Noble: ~~He~~ I always thought I was very fortunate in that respect, very much so. Of course a rifle company doesn't get the administrative that a commanding officer ~~has~~ of even a small ^{the latter} ~~there he~~ ^{here} marine barracks gets, because ~~there he~~ is the convening authority for summary court ~~martials~~ ^{martials} and probably the deck court ~~martials~~ (used to be called deck, now summary, I believe), and he had to make his own decisions and to make his own peace not only with his naval commander but with the commandant of the Marine Corps.

Q: But if you could make a comparison between the value of command the way you had it relatively early in your career, and the value of learning the company administration or the administrative processes, could you give any weight to either one of them, or would you consider them of pretty much equal importance?

Noble: I'd say the most important thing for a person that age is dealing directly with the enlisted men. That's the most important. Now his other responsibilities in administration and dealing with other people, is important, and the ~~approx~~ opportunity to develop his own, you might say, stature as a sort of a commander, that is very important too, but I think it's secondary.

Q: Right, sir.

Noble: If you don't deal closely with the men while you are young, ~~late~~ often later on you lose the opportunity.

Q: This is so. Just by virtue of your rank you . . .

Noble: You get more remote all the time.

Q: That's right, sir. By the time you become a battalion commander, you begin to get remote from your men right there.

Noble: Yes, you begin to deal ^{primarily} with officers, and certainly when you become a general officer you deal almost ^{entirely} only with officers. The only direct dealing you have with enlisted men usually is with your driver or your orderly, or somebody of that sort -- persons who have no responsibility at all except to keep you on the track. I think that's the real value of those small commands, [REDACTED] I think there's a place for them, and I think people who do not get them early in life [REDACTED] miss an experience that might do them a lot of good later. [REDACTED]

Of course, like duty aboard ship -- which I had later -- it does teach you to [REDACTED] deal with and live with other services, the Navy particularly.

Q: We are thrown with them so much that I don't think we ever quite get to the point where we really like it. I don't think I ever have.

Noble: I think it varies. (Pause)* From there I went as a student to Quantico in the Company Officers' Course, which was quite new at that time. I notice down here something about curriculum, and I've tried to think what it was. I couldn't remember it, except ^{for} [REDACTED] a few things. I know they gave us a course in Navy Courts & Boards, and we had a very definite weapons course, and we had a very strong course in ^{land} tactics with ^{map} math problems, which ^{minor}

were taken usually from the Army School at Fort Benning. And we had a course in logistics. That is about as far as I can remember.

I know we worked extremely hard. I never worked as hard in my life, in any other place at any time. We had a tremendous amount of homework and didn't have time to do anything else but that, really. It was very easy to flunk the course. The staff and the students toward the latter part of that year were directed by the commanding officer, I remember, to think in terms of applying land tactics and logistics to landing operations from ships. I remember they made quite a point of that, that we must apply these ^{tactics}. And then near the end they would tack on a problem in which you landed from a ship. It was a pretty scrambled thing because nobody knew a great deal about it. We had no doctrine to go on. But they took the solutions and the instructors studied them, and later on they came in handy. *The solutions gave the instructors*
~~They gave them~~ a great deal of experience of what people thought.

Q: During this Company Officers' Course, did they go back and refight the battles of France, the battles of World War I, and ^{try} ~~tried~~ to point out the lessons learned, this sort of thing?

Noble: Not a great deal, as I remember.

Q: I see there'd be about ^{four to} six years between the time World War I was over and the time you actually went to the School. I was just wondering if they did -- if they did go back and study those.

Noble: Well, they did in teaching weapons because we had the same weapons we used in World War I. And of course we had the same law, and many things were exactly the same. But as far as land tactics

were concerned, and our map problems, I remember that most of those were taken bodily from Fort Benning, the staff had gathered them up from being ~~a~~ student^{at} Fort Benning -- the Army Infantry School.

And later on in the other course, they were taken from the Command & General Staff ^{College}~~School~~ at Fort Leavenworth. They came home with their problems, and the School got copies of all their problems, and they were just used that way at first. Col. Dunlap was in command of the school, and later on ^{by James C.} Gen. Breckenridge began to insist that all these things be transferred -- all these tactics, ^{techniques} all these problems -- be sort of transposed ^{with a} ~~where the~~ landing operations setting.

Q: You believe then that the School was beginning to key itself to the amphibious doctrine?

Noble: Definitely, definitely. In these discussions between staff and students, and in the directives, ~~I think~~, of the senior officers who had command, we were beginning to see our ^{niche} ~~role~~ very clearly, what it should be, and everybody was enthusiastic on changing our school to be a Marine Corps school that taught this new thing called landing operations. Nobody had ever written anything about it, as far as I knew. We'd studied Gallipoli very carefully, and everybody called that a complete failure, and they drew very erroneous conclusions from it. The main erroneous conclusion was that naval gunfire is no good in supporting people going ashore, nor after they got there. And the Navy believed it thoroughly. I think we went over a little of this yesterday, and I don't want to repeat too much of that.

The other thing was, you just had no supply line. Everything was too fluid out at sea, and you soon would break up or starve to death. You couldn't get your ammunition in, and you couldn't get big artillery in to support you, and you were almost doomed to defeat. There ^{is} was a very defeatist attitude throughout. England I know had it, France had it definitely, and we certainly got it in this country.

There were a few of our officers, though, that just didn't take those conclusions at their face value. One of them was Col. Barrett. I keep repeating his name because he was ^{the greatest} ~~one~~ of the original thinkers. Col. Earl Ellis was another ^{great} ~~one~~, who died in the Bonins, I believe, right after World War I.

Q: There's a lot of mystery surrounding Col. Ellis' death, isn't there?

Noble: Yes, they couldn't find out for quite a while what really had happened to him. He went to one of the islands that ^{was} ~~was~~ under command of the Japs, and then he ~~sort of~~ dropped out of sight. It was a mystery for quite a while. Later on it was cleared up pretty well. I think he just died there of natural causes, and they gradually got his body back to Japan and apparently back home again.

Q: After your tour at the Company Officers Course as a student, you joined the 1st Provisional Battalion of the Marine Corps Expeditionary Forces.

Noble: Yes, we students were all gathered into that for this exercise on landing operations on Oahu. That was, I think, a provisional

organization, and it was simply to get us on the ships. We prepared the paperwork ahead of time, I remember -- the attack orders and so forth, -- and then we got on these ships, finally got out and attacked the north coast of Oahu against the Army garrison there. We were very lucky -- we had nothing but standard boats to go ashore with, as I remember, and that north coast (I don't know if you know it or not) is a terrific weather coast. It just happened that we just had a very calm day. That's where the big surf is, you know -- what the surfers call the big surf. We were very lucky, I thought. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Everybody else was a little apprehensive about it. [REDACTED] The Army didn't expect us to land on that coast, ^{so} we caught them almost completely by surprise. They had a few outposts along there and that's all. We just marched in, and went as far as we pleased before we got any token opposition from the Army.

Q: This was a free play operation? In other words, there wasn't any script or anything?

Noble: Yes, ~~when~~ we had umpires who told you how far you could go. There were Army umpires, and I was met on the beach by one of them, I remember. I had a boat load of people, and he said, "I am going to have to declare that you~~x~~ are all casualties here, because there is a whole platoon sitting up there." I said, "We are a ^{constructive} regiment. I am the executive officer of a regiment." (laughs) He said, "Oh, you can go ahead then -- *they're your prisoners*." (uproarious laughter covers words)

I'll never forget that!

^Q
Noble: A first liar never stands a chance.

Noble: That's right! Well, we got a lot out of that as a matter of fact, and learned quite a few practical lessons that we took back to the classroom in Quantico, after it was all over. That was my first landing operations exercise, and I think it was one of the biggest ones that the Marine Corps had ever participated in, certainly in peacetime. The Navy was beginning to take some slight interest in it too. Heretofore they didn't want to get closer than the five-fathom line. But they began to think they had an interest in putting troops ashore in various places for strategical reasons, and that pressure sort of came down from the top too. The result was that we had people trying to find out how to do it. This was quite a valuable exercise as far as I was concerned.

I came back, and like the rest of them took up our student duties, and then in May I became -- as soon as I finished school -- adjutant-secretary, and stayed adjutant-secretary for ~~two~~ years, a little over ~~two~~ ^{watched} years; from May 1925 to July 1927, and I [REDACTED] the school grow up, although at that time I didn't participate in the curriculum so much. I was administrating, but I got to see a great deal of the capabilities of the Marine officers who went through those classes, especially my seniors -- my immediate seniors -- because I kept the marks. And I will say this about those people in those days: they struck me as being very much of individuals. They felt entirely free to say anything, to make any criticism to whom they wanted ~~to~~, about anything. Not necessarily their seniors, but sometimes they didn't even spare their seniors when their seniors

weren't around. They were independent people. I think later on ^{system for promotion} the selection of officers taught them to be a little more diplomatic as a whole. The punishment in selection is so much more severe, and it's with you all the time. In the days of seniority the only way you could go wrong would be, you'd have to be almost a criminal to get court martialed and kicked out of the service, otherwise it couldn't hurt your career a bit. It might hurt the commands you'd get, but you'd go on getting your pay and promotions just the same. That tended to make people a little bit independent.

Q: I daresay it did!

Noble: So a lot of them developed into characters. We called them characters. Sometimes that was a mild name. But they all had one thing in common: they had an extremely strong sense of esprit de corps and a strong sense of loyalty and a strong sense of discipline. That we did inherit, and some of the very basic things were handed down to us. For instance, the way to train recruits was handed down to us: we have ^{not} improved on it much since in our two depots.

Q: No. I had reason to go this morning over to the depot, and I stood there for five or ten minutes and watched them on the grinder, and it sure brought back a lot of memories to me!

Noble: It did, ~~uh~~? Hasn't changed much!

Q: No sir, those drill instructors, they look about nine feet tall and everything else. They've got a hard task, though. (Pause)

After your tour at the Marine Corps Schools there, you went on board ship.

Noble: Yes, I was fortunate again. I got aboard the USS California ^{the flagship} for a two-year tour as a ship's ^MMarine officer. Of course there I did the same thing every other ^MMarine officer did. You commanded a detachment and you had the usual ^MMarine officer duties of any battleship, which ^{were} ~~was~~ to command one side of the secondary battery -- mine was the starboard side -- ~~and~~ you were a control officer, and if you could qualify you were a spotter, and you were always the law officer, ^{as well as} the judge advocate of the general court martial. And you were quite often the deck court officer, and the general adviser to the captain on legal affairs. And for some reason or another, the minute a ^MMarine officer stepped aboard a ship they'd ~~be assuming~~ ^{presume} that he was a lawyer, and often they weren't, but they had to just plain study. I had all those duties, and I made many lasting friends aboard ship. I had very pleasant duties. I thought that it was part of the education of any ^MMarine officer. I regret these days that there aren't more large ships, like battleships.

Q: I think for a while they instituted a program for the CO ^{of a} detachment to have a two year tour, but the JO was getting a one year tour. In this way they were able to send more through the system. And like you say, we do so much work with the Navy, we are so closely associated with it, that I think it does them all some good to go ~~aboard~~ aboard these ships and get some idea as to how the Navy is operating, how they function, and most of all to see how their officers think. They have a different thinking process from us, and they have a different set of values.

Noble: ^{Yes} they have a different kind of discipline, which is good for the Navy but wouldn't be good for us. That's definitely true. Also, if you are going to deal with any other service at all, extensively, you don't want to appear to them every time they see you as a stranger. You should have the image of being one of them -- a little bit different but not much different -- so that they'll be very frank and friendly from the start. That's what duty with the Navy does for marines, I think. You simply become part of a crew of a ship, and the Navy will always look on you as part of the crew of a ship. As a matter of fact you were, you were working for the ship as much as they were -- in the gunnery department, athletic department, mess department, the ceremonial department; as a matter of fact you made probably 50% of the ceremonial department; discipline department. So you really became in many ways almost a naval officer. I found it very helpful later on in dealing with the Navy that I could speak their language and I knew their problems, and they knew mine, and they knew me, or knew of me. The Navy is a sort of close corporation in many ways, and they are sometimes almost cloistered, ^{living in a} ~~separate world of their own.~~

~~And it's quite separated from the civilian world.~~ And it's quite separated from the civilian world. That's more so than the Army, I am sure. Or the Air Force.

Q: Oh yes. The Navy spend an awful lot of time at sea. They very seldom are in port, and then when they are they are usually exercising all the time. It's a very demanding life.

Noble: Yes, and I'll say this about the Navy. What they do they do extremely well, I always thought. Their maneuvers ^{the way} and they can

organize a task force and get it under way, with the full understanding of everybody and go out and accomplish some mission that ^{requires} a fast and smooth operation. And they work at it. They certainly ^{did} work their gunnery when I was a young officer, and they became very expert at it. They never succeeded in making me very expert, but they made me work at it!

Q: During your time at sea duty, ^{you} went to Nicaragua as part of the brigade down there. So your record indicates. Could you elaborate on that a little bit?

Noble: Yes. They felt in need of more troops down there at the time of elections. We were supervising elections with the troops we had down there, and they needed more people, so they took for temporary duty ashore the detachments of the battle fleet here. We went down for about seven months, I think it was, and we acted as a sort of a reserve in case there was too much Sandinista activity or too much activity at the polls. ^{The Marines} ~~They~~ did guarantee a very fine, smooth election. My particular duty -- that is, my detachment and myself -- was simply in the old compound at Managua. I lived in the old president's palace, and we just trained there as best we could and waited for something to happen, and nothing ever happened. Finally the elections went off very well and they took us and sent us back to ship. It was a nice break in the sea duty, and a good experience. I personally got to observe what I call two things: one is operations in Central American countries, (and) at the request of their government to help them straighten out their elections and form stable governments. The other was that I thought I gained a

little more of an insight into the general attitude of ^{the people of} Central America, and that even goes down into South America, and of what they think about the United States, how they regard us. I could feel that I could put myself in their shoes much more than I could before, much better. ~~and~~ I could ^{more readily} realize what those little countries are up against. They still are up against the same thing, almost, countries like Guatemala, Ecuador, places of that sort. ^{we} Indicate that things are not very much different from what they were when I went down there in the 20s; generally speaking the same attitudes prevail. We have about the same image now as we had then, as far as I can see. Which isn't a bad image, as a matter of fact. In fact I think it ^{often} sort of keeps them on their track. ~~a good deal~~

One of the wisest bits of diplomacy this ^{country} ~~company~~ ever did do was to invite their young officers in their armed forces up to our schools and ~~then~~ give them their military education, and send them back home, because the basis of power in practically all those countries is the military, and it will continue to be. They have ^{fire written} ~~a~~ constitution, ~~there~~ and everything, but they can suspend ^{them} ~~it~~ in no time. Quite often they have military juntas that take over, and it's not an unknown thing, it's regarded as almost normal. If the military doesn't approve of the way the constitutional president is conducting the affairs of the country, ~~and~~ they get together some of the higher ranking officers and decide that it isn't good for the country, they make no bones at all about going in and overthrowing him, then sitting down as the junta and run it a while. They think it's right, then they step out and let them have elections and elect another president. They ~~think~~ think that's quite ^{acceptable} ~~normal~~ still today. I don't say they think it's normal, but it's had lots of precedents and they don't get shocked by it.

We would be shocked in this country if anybody ^{of importance} were preaching the overthrow of the constitutional government. Our Constitution and so forth. They don't think that way at all in some of those countries. And they don't in France: they have a different republic any time ^{any party has} ~~enough~~ enough strength to form one! (laughs)

Well, I am getting off on another subject. But it's part of the education of a ~~Marine~~ Marine officer.

Q: Yes sir, it is.

Noble: Let's see. In July 1929 I returned to Quantico and there I stayed with the Schools for three years. The first year I was a student in the Field Officers' Course, and the second and third year I was an instructor there in the Field Officers ~~course~~ ^{COURSE}. There I really was dipped into the ^{fountain} ~~the~~ -- with the people who were building up the ship-to-shore operations, the landing operations of the Marine Corps. I was with some of the people that did the most, the outstanding people, people who were thinking ahead and didn't accept any previous conclusions on ^{any} ~~the~~ tactic that had ever been written, or rumored or voiced around in various other schools of ^{our own and} other countries, ~~and our own~~. They looked at everything with a question mark. They didn't believe anything was impossible. I remember that in the middle of that period we had one instructor -- Gen. Barrett -- who got up before the class and ~~he~~ said, "If ^{Gallipoli} ~~the~~ has proved anything it's proven that landing operations even against opposition ~~is~~ ^{as} comparatively simple. It has also proven that keeping ^{troops} ~~them~~ ashore and keeping them fighting is even more difficult than the landing." Well, that ~~course~~ raised the prestige of the people who were teaching the logistics!

Up to that time nobody ~~to~~ thought very much about logistics. You thought about tactics and fighting, and going around the right flank and so forth, and making feints and surprises and carrying out the rules and principles of war, which says very little about logistics. But it turned up in this thing that logistics was a terrifically big thing. The rest was mostly gunnery and timing.

It was recognized, though, that in those operations, involving ~~not-only~~ two or three services anyway -- the Air and the Navy, and the land forces -- requires a tremendous amount of know-how to even ^{formulate} the orders, to provide for minute timing at ~~a~~ certain times ~~and~~ place, not only for the initial landing but also for continuing to get the stuff ashore to back ~~them~~ up ^{and support succeeding objectives.} The writing of orders and the planning of one of those operations was almost a thing they didn't know how to do in the past: they just couldn't do it, it was too complex. Now it is still complex, but it is well understood by the officers, and they can do it, and they can make the timing, and make it come out, and they know it's going to come out, and have some confidence in it, and so does the Navy. That's something that in the beginning they just didn't have; nobody had any confidence in anything like that succeeding. (Pause)

Well, the school during that period really developed the first extensive landing operations ^{map} ~~data~~ problem, and wrote ~~and~~ ~~themselves~~ them themselves. Leavenworth had nothing to do with this: these were ^{Marine Corps - Navy} ~~these~~ problems. And they gathered a lot of data that was later worked into what we now call ~~a~~ technique -- the various details of it: communications, ^{jungle} ~~land~~ warfare, ship-shore movements, naval gunfire air support and things of that sort. That was all fought over, argued over and put into problems, ~~and~~ ~~conclusions~~. And finally conclusions

were drawn, examples of orders were written as being workable. Later on that was actually boiled down into a doctrine and written up as such. But first all this had to be done, and that's where the work was done. There wasn't any one man who did it. There were a few that I considered outstanding, but that's not all the ~~problem~~ ^{story}. There were a tremendous number of marine officers working on this and contributing to it.

Q: It sounds as though this was probably one of the most interesting times to be in the schools there.

Noble: Oh it was! Definitely. Never before or never since has the schools and the people at the schools, felt the responsibility of developing a whole new form of strategy and tactics -- developing it so it could be actually exercised. ~~It was new, it was plowing new ground and developing things, and you had a feeling that you were really doing something worthwhile, because it was very plain to see that any war in the Pacific --~~ It was new, it was plowing new ground and developing things, and you had a feeling that you were really doing something worthwhile, because it was very plain ~~to see that any war in the Pacific --~~ ^{to} see that any war in the Pacific -- which hadn't come up yet, but everybody expected it would eventually. (We even thought Japan would start it, it was very obvious)-- had to be that sort of a war, and America never had that kind of a war before. But we did have a Navy and we did have a Marine Corps. And so did Japan. So we knew it would be just attacking and defending island one right after another. And navies can't go by those islands and bypass them: they've got to own ~~them~~ ^{at least} some of them, enough to be able to operate and project their power into other areas. So all that was becoming quite obvious. And it became obvious also at the Naval War College. They gradually worked into that. And so every year then we went up and gave what we call the Naval War College

problems which was a complete problem, ^{one year} involving one locality, another year another locality. We would get up and give that problem and it would take all day to do it, with illustrations, slides, pictures, everything. We finally made mockups up naval formations, and they looked exactly like somebody had taken pictures at sea. That was very interesting to the naval officers, and all of that was ingraining a consciousness of that kind of warfare, which ~~was~~ ^{had a} rather slow ^{beginning} ~~being~~ ^{because} ~~in~~ in the Navy. It went much faster in the Marine Corps, ~~we~~ were writing all this stuff, not the Navy.

Q: Yes, I can understand why we would be a lot more in favor of it than they.

Noble: Yes. I think we could see the answer. We were in a position to project the whole subject a little easier than they could, because we knew the problems of land fighting and they didn't. We also had a smattering of what naval fighting is, too, not because we participated in it, or not because we were experts like the naval officers, but we had people who had served with the Navy on their staffs and ~~on~~ on their ships, and we did know the difficulties that they were up against.

For instance in one chapter we wrote in that landing operations doctrine in the tentative thing that was sent out, and later in the doctrine, called "Ship to Shore Movement", of troops and boats and how to do it, that's almost completely a Navy problem. But such things as rendez-vous areas for boats in relation to ships, line of departure, control vessels to control it, communication setup in between, and the gunfire that went with it -- all of this was developed by ~~the~~ Marines. And it worked. It's the only way you could

do it. In fact I wrote the first chapter and it's still the same wording. That doesn't mean that I originated it. All this thing was a buildup, but I was the guy that took the pencil and paper and did it! (laughs softly) But I had an opportunity: I was on the first board, ~~up there~~. The ^{Henry D.} commandant convened a board of us headed by Barrett, and there were three of us altogether, ^(Gen. Prescott at one time & Gen. Arch Howard at another) to write a book -- and he didn't know what to call it, a manual or something; we got away from the word manual later because it wasn't a manual -- and we could take all the time we wanted; it would have priority on any other duties we were doing, always, except, he said -- ^{May John H.} Gen. Russell was the commandant -- "You can't have an indefinite time! Not indefinite!" He said, "I want to see something that's good and plausible and acceptable to the Navy and the Marine Corps within a year. At least within a year." Well, we plowed over it for about a year, over a year, I think. Finally we came up with something, and then as you know we put it out to the Navy for another year for them to comment on. ~~Then~~ ^{commented at length} they ~~did~~, and then I was on the board of revision, which took their comments and revised ^{and edited} the whole thing. ~~and~~ It turned out that ^{let} FTP, ^(Fleet training publication) Fleet training ~~was~~ ^{doctrine on the subject} was the only ~~thing~~ in existence when the second war started. And on that was based all our landing planning, and from that was written the ^{manuals} ~~technical things~~ to carry it farther, ⁱⁿ and various technical details.

Q: It amazes me in looking back what a firm foundation we built there, because to my knowledge there's been very little -- well, I can't recollect any major changes that have been made to our first plans for landing, for opposed landings like that. And it just amazes me that we came through with something that is so doggone good.

Noble: Well, it's fundamental. For instance, it wasn't written that it took a certain type of boat to do a certain thing. It was written that a certain thing had to be accomplished. That's why boats were developed that didn't change the doctrine a bit, that would fit right in with it. As matter of fact the doctrine guided the development of boats.

Q: Well, later on we ran into some problems in the Pacific with the coral reefs and how to get across those, and as a result of this we developed the LVT.

Noble: Yes. I was in on that. I have to tell you about it, I guess.

Q: That's what I was getting around to!

Noble: Where are we now?

Q: I think we are about ready to go to Haiti.

Noble: Fine. And this is all on the schools -- we finished?

Q: I think we finished that, sir. You were in Haiti a little over two years, from July 1932 to August 1934.

Noble: Yes, that's right. I was there when the ~~Marines~~ ^{Marines} came out of Haiti, which was almost 20 years after they went in. ~~They sent~~
~~an assistant adjutant and inspector to Haiti as their representative~~. Headquarters had appointed me assistant adjutant and inspector and sent me to Haiti as their representative ~~to do the inspecting that was necessary~~, to do the inspecting that was necessary

to be done when I was told to ^{do so} by Washington. A peculiar thing. Meanwhile I was to report to the commanding officer down there, the brigade commander, and do what he said. I wore sort of two hats a little bit, but I didn't pay too much attention to that Adjutant-Inspector business, really. I went down, and then Colonel Louis McCarty Little was brigade commander. I became at first the personnel officer and the brigade inspector, and later on I fell heir to being the chief of staff, and then I was promoted to major without pay. In fact my captain's pay was reduced 15%. I didn't get reimbursed until after I retired right here. I didn't think I ^{ever} would be. There was a ruling by the ^{MP} controller-general, and when I was in Washington I appeared before the Bureau of the Budget and they all agreed that I was right, but it didn't fit in with the plans of the President for the budget, and up until then they'd have to accept the ^{MP} controller-general's ruling, that a promotion from captain to major was an automatic promotion. I remember my arguments were, "What's automatic with having to pass a mental examination, ~~with~~ written, a physical examination by a doctor, and get special appointment by the President and approved by the Senate of the United States? What's automatic about any of these things?" (laughs) And they all laughed, ~~they all laughed and laughed~~, they all thought it was a great joke. I'd made a point, but they didn't give it to me! (laughs) I've told many an officer, "I tell you, you don't know what ^{life} is until you've experienced a real out-and-out blatant injustice. After you have, and have had to swallow it, and taken it and you don't like it, then you realize that you begin to get mature." Then I tell them this story -- ^{how} the Government still owed me money, but I would never get it, ~~how~~. What knocked the whole thing

in the head? ~~was~~ ^{if} Doggone it, they didn't bring somebody before the Court of ~~Claims~~, and the upshot was that

It was all paid up by over 2000 dollars! (laughs) Right when I was in La Jolla, retired. About 1959, I guess, or 1960.

Q: I'll be darned.

Noble: Surprised the life out of me. My pet philosophy knocked in the head.

Where were we? Oh, in Haiti. There I learned how to play polo, and I learned how to race horses, jockey horses. I won the Pan-American Cup with the horse that won the most races in a year, and by doing so I pleased my commanding officer, who was a great horseman.

I also learned something about occupation of a foreign country, what it involved. Also how the diplomats had to work because Gen. Little had a great deal of diplomatic and semi-diplomatic duties to do in dealing with the Minister, not only of his own country but ~~in~~ ^{of} other countries. ^{represented in Haiti} Cut that off, I'll tell you a story.

Something that happened in Haiti was really of historical value. Right toward the end, when we were about to get out of the country -- and I think that would almost always apply to lots of places where we are occupying -- and they were planning to get out, there is always a rumor that runs around that you are very unpopular and the opposition is going to take this opportunity to throw stones at you and maybe shoot at you and everything else and take the credit for driving you out of the country, and showing how unpopular you are. Well, it ~~was~~ ^{our} got some of ~~the~~ higher-ups a little bit nervous about it. They didn't know, nobody had any way of being sure just what the Haitians

thought, you know. We thought we were on good terms with them, but now that we were going to leave they ^{could} see the old rattlesnake had ^{had} its fangs ^{pulled}, ^{some of our people} thought ^{we could} have some unpleasantness, and they even suggested that the last increment on the ship, instead of going at the time we published to go, move the night earlier. And I remember I was a ~~1000~~ standout, the chief of staff of the brigade, against any such stunt. "We ^{should go} ~~are going~~ out -- I said -- with the band playing and the flag flying, ^{we should} ~~are going to~~ march down there, and if they want to throw stones they can throw them. We are not going to sneak out of the country after 20 years!!" And they immediately saw the point. They were apprehensive and everything, but they saw it. ~~They were apprehensive and everything, but they saw it.~~ Even if something does happen we can't go sneaking around with ^{but} tail between our legs. So we ^{paraded down} ~~went~~, and instead of having stones thrown at us there were flowers: it was the darndest thing you ever saw. You would have thought it was triumphant people coming home from the wars. There were ^{crowds of} Haitians alongside the road, the automobile went down with the Minister in it, and with Gen. Little, and they had ~~a~~ big battalion of the Garde d'Haiti down at the dock. They gave him his full honors, (except the guns up in the fort didn't go off ^{on time}). Right in the middle of it he had to cut it short. We went down, got on ^{the} ship and that was that. But that's just another tale, that doesn't have any historical value. You can cut that out later. Doesn't sound good *anyway*.

That was all, and it brings us to 1934.

Q: You find yourself once again back in the ~~Adjutant~~ and ~~Inspector~~ Department at Headquarters Marine Corps.

Noble: Yes. There I had all kinds of duties, as everybody does. One of them was -- I see it down here -- revision of the landing operations manual. That's true. The other one was ordinary duties of the Adjutant ^{to} Inspector Department, at first. And at one time I was in charge of all funerals, ~~funerals~~, of ~~the~~ ^Mmarine officers in Arlington. And I met all the widows, told them how much pension they were going to get, and did ~~we~~ ^{they} want a guard and band at Arlington and so forth, and arranged this. I did that for about three months. That's the most depressing duty I ever had.

Q: Isn't it though?

~~Noble: Oh yes. Oh -- wait a minute now.~~

Q: This fleet landing exercise in January of 1937 -- was that a . . .

~~Noble: There's something left out here. I'll have to look into that for the next time. This -- September '34 to June '37, that's three years -- I ^{in the} ~~was an~~ adjutant inspector department all that time, I think and then I think I went down to the schools. Yes. And had duty with the 5th marine regiment. That was the 2nd battalion 5th marines. That's the regiment. And . . .~~

Q: That was in July 1939 that you were assigned to . . .

~~Noble: That's right, and then I succeeded later as commanding officer of the 5th marines. We had more maneuvers down in the Caribbean. Then I came up to Washington, first as M-4; then I shifted~~

~~over to Plans & Politics. So you see, that whole tour down there at the Marine Corps Schools and in the FMF, and in the 5th marines, that all came in between.~~

~~Then after the next trip up there in Plans & Politics, I went from there into the 3rd division out here, in the war. That was before the war. That's the way it was.~~

Noble: ~~After that~~ ^{After that} adjutant-inspector duty -- I don't seem to remember ~~Fleet Landing Exercise~~ ^{Fleet Landing Exercise} number 3. I think I went out ^{to San Diego} ~~there~~ as an observer.

Q: Probably so.

Noble: They landed on San Clemente out here.

Q: Is this the landing they made at San Clemente where they utilized ~~the~~ marines carrying flags to represent battalions and regiments, things of this nature?

Noble: I think we did.

Q: Was this a joint landing with the Army? Or just by the Marines?

Noble: I don't think so. I wasn't connected with it, except to observe it, and write it up and take it back, which I did. I didn't stay there long, just during the exercise.

Q: After that I assume, looking at your record, pretty soon after that you went down to the barracks at Quantico into the F-3 section.

Noble: Of the schools.

Q: Of the schools, yes, sir. And that constituted about a two-year tour.

Noble: Well, F-3 section and assistant commandant together. Buttrick was the commanding general -- ^{James T.} Brig. Gen. Buttrick. That was in June of 1937, until June of 1939. That's two years.

Q: Yes sir.

Noble: I was chief of the F-3 section for the first year, ~~about~~, and ~~as~~ assistant commandant for the second year, ~~and~~ Gen. Buttrick was the commanding general of the schools. The schools had advanced a great deal then. We had then a very fine gunnery department, with a naval commander as the head of it, and ^{a naval} ~~an~~ assistant or two. We were getting naval officers then as students, more than we ever did before. And they were working all their problems, it was ~~was~~ much more advanced, all their problems were much more advanced, more like it is now, I imagine, except it's more fancy now and they've got more libraries, more references, more everything -- better, I suppose. But you work just as hard. The funny thing about a school, it doesn't depend so awfully much on your surrounding, on your housing, or even your training ~~ade~~, as it does on the people you have there. If you've got good instructors ~~as~~ you've got a good school, even if it's in a barn.

Well, what do you want me to . . .

End of Side 1, Tape 1, Session II.

Session III - 22 May 1968.

Tape 1, Side 1.

Clarke
Noble: I was very fortunate in being able to join the 1st Marine Brigade, Fleet Marine Force. Gen. R.P. Williams was in command, Gen. Barrett had the 5th Regiment, and Lt. Col. Clement had the 1st Battalion of the 5th Marines, and I had the remaining battalion -- the 2nd Battalion. That constituted just about all of the organized Fleet Marine Force the Marine Corps had at that time, except that there was an engineer company, a headquarters company and ~~the~~ a regiment of pack howitzers, and I don't know whether they had a battalion or two battalions. ~~There was~~ But that was it. When the war came along, on this coast at least, we had to make the 1st Marine Division and many other troops that went with it from cadres really out of those two battalions.

Q: You were here at Camp Elliott, weren't you?

Noble: No, ~~that~~ ^{this} was before. This was in 1939.

Q: You were still down at the recruit ~~ing~~ depot?

Noble: No, in Quantico, Virginia, and I had the 2nd Battalion. That was the setup in Quantico on that coast. On this coast they had a few units, but they hadn't quite organized the 6th Marines yet. I don't know exactly when they were organized, but they came later on, when Gen. Holcomb was Commandant. I know at the time he saw me he said, "At last, we've got the best regiment organized again!" He having

measuring on a thumb how long the plane was, the direction in which it was going, and how much he'd lead in order to hit. And we got a fairly good overall rough idea to give infantrymen. Before that time it was considered more or less unprofitable to shoot at airplanes. In World War I we were told not to do it because we never seemed to hit any of them. But with these automatic weapons I notice that they are doing it over in Vietnam and they are knocking down planes that way.

Q: They certainly are.

Noble: And we found too that it would be profitable to do it, unless it was much more advisable to hide and not let them see ~~where you were~~ *located*.

Then we had some landing exercises while I was with the 2nd Battalion 5th Marines, down in the Culebra-Vieques area. I liked that very much because it gave me a chance to either have command of an element of the offense or of the defense. Actually, inasmuch as there were only two battalions in the regiment -- Clement had one and I had the other -- no matter whether we had a battalion maneuvers opposed, or the brigade had regimental maneuvers, or brigade maneuvers or division maneuvers, it wound up with one battalion against the other every time! Clement and I were friendly enemies for the whole time: we'd go out and fight each other all day.

And then they'd talk about it -- the colonels and the generals -- about whether they won their battle or not. That was all constructive.

"It was down in Culebra at that time that I -- and I believe it was the first time in the Marine Corps -- as a task organization to defend the island of Culebra was given operational command (control

I guess you'd call it, operational control) over a squadron of submarines, and I forget how many naval aircraft in the defense. And I was able to write them orders and they had to carry them out. I thought it was wonderful for a Marine officer to have that much authority *over naval units.*

Q: How in the world did they ever let you get away with that?

Noble: Well, that was a ^{boatie} task organization we set up to defend Culebra. We had people out ^{on} board ship to attack the island, ^{with} and I had the defense, ~~my~~ my battalion, plus a few other little *land units*. We were getting information all around from aircraft and from submarines as to the progress of that ^{enemy task} force ^{at sea.} And we knew about where ^{they} ~~we~~ were, ^{we} tracked them and we headed them off, and all that was done from onshore at my headquarters at Culebra. And as a lieutenant colonel I felt real good about that, because the Navy was very jealous about letting anybody else command even a rowboat, ~~of anything.~~

I don't know that anything else of any great importance took place while I had the ^B 2nd ^M battalion 5th Marines, but I regard it as a high spot because there were only two battalions to be had in the Marine Corps, and to get command of one of them even for a short time ~~was~~ took quite a little doing. I don't know how it happened that I got it, really. They must have run out of marine officers!

While I had that battalion I did have the job of the markers and scorers detachment at Camp Perry and was able to see the national matches one summer. We ~~took the whole battalion out~~ took the whole battalion out there.

Q: Let's digress just a little bit on this note here about the national rifle matches. As you know we've been pretty well forced to pull out of that now, and I was wondering, General, what's your opinion on that? Do ~~you~~ you think that the Marine Corps supporting the national rifle matches was of some value to it?

Noble: It certainly was at that time; it gave us a ^{little} national ^{publicity} ~~match~~ in the first place, and we got a little contact with the Army and the civilian rifle groups that did the shooting out there in the national matches. And also the national matches in which the Marine Corps always had a team and won quite often the big cups, was a very important thing to the ^{morale of the} Marine Corps ^{itself}. We didn't have very many important things to do, really; that was one of them, and we thought it was valuable ^{to us and to the country}. It didn't take up much time. I don't think I was out there over a month, maybe a little over a month. It cost us a ~~little~~ little money, yes, and the Marine Corps didn't have much money then. We were always scraping the bottom of the barrel for money until World War II. From then on it seemed like we had plenty of money.

Q: They still yell, "We need more! We need more!"

Noble: Yes, that's true.

Noble: You left 2-5 and you then became the commanding officer of the regiment.

(then Colonel)

Noble: Yes. I succeeded in command Gen. Barrett as commanding officer of the 5th Marines, in May 1940 to May 1941. Gen. Barrett

went on to Headquarters -- he was a colonel then -- and I believe he was chief of Plans & Policies then. Brig. Gen. H.M. Smith relieved *Brig.* Gen. R.P. Williams in command of the brigade, and that was rather a mark for Gen. H.M. Smith because that brigade became eventually the 1st Marine Division, and he grew up with that ^{division} from scratch, and from that he grew up with the Amphibious Corps of the Pacific, and he never left ^{that} command from then on. ~~He never had a command before that~~ Seems to me that ^{1st B} ~~first~~ brigade was the only command he ever had that I know of. *I could be wrong.*

Q: Well, I guess he felt it was better to start at the top, and why worry about the bottom.

Noble: Well, somebody else thought so too, I guess, (laughs) because they are the ones that assigned him.

Q: He was very fortunate in the life of command that he actually had.

Noble: Yes, he was. Once you get in something and it's growing there is very little room for change as long as you are doing it well.

We had another maneuver after Gen. Smith was in command, and I think it was called FLEX-7, ~~but it was called something~~. Anyway we went down to Culebra and Vieques again, and Adm. King had the fleet down there and we worked with him. And we built the camp at Guantanamo Bay -- levelled off all ^{the} ~~those~~ hills and peninsulas there in the Bay with our own engineer company, and put up tents for not only the 5th Regiment but for the artillery and the headquarters and brigade headquarters, things like that: we had quite a camp going there and we were very proud of it.

And that's when we were called upon to organize the 1st Division
 I say we: I was regimental commander, and Gen. Smith was called upon
 to organize it. I know we built up the -- I guess it was the 7th
~~infantry~~ ^{marines} there. And we had a very smooth system of using the old
 units like the 5th ~~marines~~ ^{Marines} to cadre the new regiment right alongside.

Q: I was going to ask you about that. They utilized, they kind of
 split up the 5th in order to form the 7th.

Noble: Yes, but nothing was split up. Actually at the end of their
 short time -- a month or two -- the two regiments were equally strong
 and completely organized. And the way it was done generally -- I don't
 know if it's usually done that way, but I think not -- was, when
 enough recruits or men, which were sent from headquarters, of all
 ranks and specialties, when they arrived, for example a company -- if
 you wanted to make a cadre of a company -- you would make the mother
 company fill up all of its platoons, ^(no matter how many) exactly even, non commissioned
 officers and everybody else. Then one of those ^{or more} platoons ^{platoons} would be chosen
^{by lot} to go into the new regiment. ~~and the other company got all the recruits.~~
^{the mother company} So ~~the mother company~~ distributed ^{more recruits} and reorganized into three
^{or more} platoons like ^{it} did before. The other regiment ^{received} platoon with
 the required number of corporals, sergeants and everything else, and
 they weren't strangers; they'd ^{been} drilling together, ^{and maneuvering in the mother company.}
~~and everything else. That was just basically: so the new~~
~~unit just got bodily one unit right after another that had been~~
~~changed at all.~~ And the parent organization, they weren't digged into
^{very seriously} ^{usually only one or more} ^{even} ^{disappeared}
 at all, ~~anyone~~ of their small units. That didn't apply to senior
 non commissioned officers or officers, of course. But it did to all
 down in the infantry and also in the batteries. And it's a very

^{and fast} smooth way to do it. Then the camp of the other regiment right along-
side yours. Heavens, inside of ^{a few} ~~ten~~ days, the other ^{after the recruits}
^{came in} recruit company, they've got their ~~right~~ and they are
ready to go out on maneuvers, really. They are complete units.

Q: Did this take place at Guantanamo Bay?

Noble: Yes. I think it kept on taking place until ~~it was built up~~
~~again~~ they came back to the States, but there was
a little retrogression. I'd left the division, but there was a little
^{pause} ~~retrogression~~ in the United States because when they got back part
of them went to Lejeune, I think, and part went down to Florida or
some place, and they were sort of split up for various reasons. And
part went to Quantico. There was a little stalemate there, and I
forget the reason, ~~for~~ ^{the division} and then ~~it~~ ^{and assembled} was built up again.
~~Some~~ ^B Some units for the 2nd division and also the 3rd division were
formed the same way in the United States. I was at Headquarters at
the time.

I don't know anything else we did at Guantanamo Bay of any note.
I left it in May 1941, and ^{proceeded} ~~went~~ up to Washington, ^{where} ~~and~~ was assigned
M-1, which was the materiel section division of Plans & Policies. I
knew nothing about that at all and had no experience with procurement
of any kind, or policies of procurement, and that was just the time
when we would really have to make some big decisions on procurement
because we knew we were right in the war. For example, what kind of
a gas mask would the Marine Corps have? We were also in the midst of
throwing the old World War I pack overboard and adopting a new pack.
I put a lot of time on that, and the new pack really grew up from a
boy scout's pack, which was a much better one than the World War I

thing, which was a backbreaker. Well, we had to get that, and we had to decide on what kind of ~~boats~~ ^{helmets} to buy for the Marine Corps. And boats, and amphibian tractors. That was the time when we were trying to arrive -- and the Navy was too, ~~trying to arrive~~ -- at what kind of boat to take on the transports to put the troops ashore in. And the boat guns for them. We had already decided that they were a profitable thing. I think later for some reason ^{the boat guns were taken off} -- well, I think I know the reason, ~~the boat guns were taken off~~, the ramps get in the way for one thing. But of course we always had in mind a very heavily defended place which you had to attack. Now that we have the amphibious tractors we ~~have~~ have much more wider choice on where we can attack, and usually can avoid the heavy defenses. That's something you couldn't do when you had standard boats or ~~other~~ ^{simple conventional} boats ~~on~~ that couldn't crawl over a coral or a mangrove.

For instance ~~the Navy had a lot of boats, but they went~~
^{A naval boat, including me proceeded}
 to Cape May and tried ~~to~~ ^{to} work out many civilian boats that were making bids for adoption. We stayed there quite a while. We all lived in a beach cottage, and experimented with the boats that ~~they~~ ^{bidders} brought in -- motor boats ~~of~~ ^{of} all types and kinds. None of them had a ramp in the bow. ^{They were} ~~They were~~ for taking troops ashore. They had a small ramp, some of them, but to walk down, carry a little cart or something but nothing like the bigger ones later. They had a lot of speed ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ those things, and we even experimented with catamarans and also boats with a sort of sled bottom. ^{with a step.} They were high powered and had lots of speed that would get up to 30 and 40 miles an hour on smooth water, but the minute we took them out on the ocean they'd nearly break your neck. Matter of fact I went out one day when the man who built ^{the boat} ~~it~~ and owned it was demonstrating it, and we hit sort of a medium sea out there and he broke his arm, threw him up in the air and came down

in the bottom ~~of the boat~~. Another day I went ^{out} there -- another *M*arine and myself were in the bow of the boat with a 30 pound anchor. We all went up in the air, the anchor and the two humans. We all came down together at the bottom of the boat, but nobody got hurt, not even the anchor!! But that was very interesting.

It was also during that period that I was sent down to Clearwater, Florida, to ~~see~~ follow up on Donald Roebling's ~~extension~~ invention of the amphibian tractor. He had built it in his garage, and it was really working/ It was clumsy, he had a lot of trouble with salt water getting in the field of the bearings, and he had representatives from *Timphkin Bearings* ~~LINK~~ Chain Belt, Borg-Warner -- many of the big corporations down there. So we would hold conferences at night and go out in the tractor in the daytime and pile through mangroves, and examine it, get under it and over it and fool with it. I did that for a week and I had the time of my life before I went back to Washington!

But from that grew the amphibian tractor. I got back in Washington for a while, and in due time I remember ^{that} the president of ~~of~~ Borg-Warner Corporation came there and called me among others before him to see whether or not Borg-Warner would go into the manufacture of amphibian tractors. But ^{first} he wanted to be educated on what we were going to use them for and would we really use them if we got into the war in the Pacific. I remember I talked about it for two hours, and he prodded me on that. At the end of that, ^{session} (just to show a man that has the money and the power to spend) he said, "All right, our corporation will go into this, and I'll send down an engineer section to develop this tractor into our own idea of what will do the job. And we'll open up a shop here in Washington and we'll come out with a plan in a month or two, which we will submit,

and then we'll be able to go ahead and set up the machinery for manufacturing it." And that's exactly what happened. I learned later he only put about 5 or 6 million dollars in it, that's all, right out of the pocket of the corporation. ~~He made a big mistake, but~~ ~~it was a big mistake~~. Didn't take much time doing it!

So, education of a ~~marine~~ officer.

Q: ~~Was~~ there any other unique pieces of equipment along that time? You mentioned the gas mask and the LVTs. Any other piece of equipment kind of unique to the Marine Corps that came along during that time?

Noble: Of course the development of the boats and the pack. Those are the only things I can think of right now. The very interesting thing was that during that time the Marine Corps adopted such fancy things as a wardog -- to have a ~~wardog~~ ^{organized} wardog unit. And also parachute battalions, which we ~~did~~ ^{organized} and they had parachute training, and ~~turned out to~~ ^{turned out to} be real good ^{raiders} at jumping. And ~~a~~ ^{raider} battalions. I agreed and recommended everything -- almost everything -- that we did, except I recommended strongly against the wardogs formations, strongly against the parachute battalions, strongly against the ~~raiders~~ ^{raiders}. And I was defeated on all three things! There was quite a bit of politics in with this. It seems that the President was very much influenced by an Army officer -- I suppose it was an Army officer, National Guard or something -- who was a particular friend of his ~~named Donovan~~ ^{Gen William}, and he sent Donovan over to see how the ~~British~~ ^{British} thought about this war ^{dog business} and so forth. And Donovan went over and came back with the idea that you must have wardogs, and you must have parachute battalions and you must have ~~raiders~~ ^{commandos}. You organize people to especially go and raid someplace; they have to learn how to swim,

and learn how to do this, that and the other. ^{little gemmich.} It was just exactly what marines were taught to do, nothing new, a lot of fancy nomenclature on everything. And also Donovan ^{was} ~~was~~ to be placed at the head of the organization of this special ^{commando} ~~unit~~ outfit, in which he would have his pick, carte blanche from the Army ^{or} ~~and~~ Navy or Marine Corps, and use Quantico as the base, and he would have a little Army all of his own -- ^{apparently} that's what he was after. ^{Roosevelt was almost} ~~was almost~~ ^{sold on it.} ~~was almost~~. The Commandant of the Marine Corps wrote a letter against it, went to see the President against it, ^{The President} ~~he~~ held it off for a while in abeyance and then ~~he~~ pushed it again, and then the Commandant wrote -- I wrote one letter for him to sign, which he did, which was quite strong, against -- I forget what it was -- the ^{Commandant} ~~President~~ at that time. ^{But it did no good.} They weren't called the raiders. ^{then} That's my nomenclature. I looked it up in the dictionary and thought it was sort of American. I first thought of rangers, and then ~~I~~ thought raiders sounded better. Later on doggone if the Army didn't organize some rangers!! And of course Roosevelt's son got put with the raider battalions along with another one of our sort of . . . well, is sort of a man unto himself. ^{but Quinns Carlson.} And they began to ask for additional equipment, special equipment. I remember young Roosevelt came up and got hold of ^{Harold} Ickes, who was a Cabinet member, and Ickes ^{urged} ~~gave~~ him ^{to get} a certain type of radio that he thought was fine. ^{The proposition} ~~was~~ came to me and I bucked; I wouldn't ^{recommend} ~~any~~ any special kind of radio for those particular battalions. But I think they got them just the same, because the Secretary of the Interior ^{bought them and} just turned them over to ~~the~~ young Roosevelt, that's all. I forget how many radios there were -- mobile radios. So for a while they were equipped with special radios: not Marine Corps equipment at all.

The whole business darn near got smack out of the Marine Corps. I was against it in the beginning and I hedged all the way through. And I kept on so strong that I believe I was instrumental in a small way to get them abandoned, to turn them into ^{badly needed} infantry which they should have been. They were adopting all new kinds of theories, you know, and discipline -- lack of discipline: the officers would eat with the men, stand in line with the men, and they took their cue from the rising communist army in China. It was sort of a halfway red outfit. It seemed it didn't affect the men so much. After we put them back into the infantry where they belonged, the men turned out to be very good anyway, all through it. But ^{some of} the officers had got wild as rabbits!

Q: They really got carried away with the plan.

Noble: I thought so, yes. Of course we had some good officers in there, but most of them just didn't have any ^{visible} discipline at all. They found it out, of course. I was definitely against the organization in the Marine Corps -- and I still am -- of any intra-Marine Corps Corps d'élite. That's all right for a nation. It's all right for the Marine Corps to be the Corps d'élite of the Armed Forces of the United States, but we didn't need one of our own. We are small enough, or were, to have an esprit de corps as a whole. We didn't have to have the esprit of some little old outfit and wear a certain kind of a beret or something. I am not taking a sling at the Green Berets of the Army: I guess if they need them they can have them; but I don't think those things fit in the Marine Corps at all, even big as we are. I would be against it even today, I think

Q: About the closest we have now are the force reconnaissance companies, and some of those guys get carried away with the program too. They think they are the greatest thing. In my contention, you take any good infantry battalion, any good infantry platoon, and it will do anything you ask of it, so why do you need anything better than that?

Noble: I can see where you need specialized training sometimes for certain things. But the trouble with this corps d'élite business is, *the personnel will in effect come out of* ~~your~~ your regular infantry and dilute them of the good men. And everybody that's left in the regular infantry will feel that they must be number 2 or they would have been picked to go with one of these fine outfits. So you just dilute the self respect of everybody else, and that's a very definite bad morale thing to do. I was against these things for that reason. Of course a parachute battalion, I couldn't foresee whether it would ever be *regularly* used in these islands. Who was going to drop parachutists in these jungles? We knew what those islands were all about. And then feed them after they got there: we didn't have *men to spare* ~~any~~, and we had no helicopters or anything. It would have tied us down, we would have lost a lot of men, we would have accomplished we didn't know what. This shooting in the dark with units around an enemy line, unless you know what you are doing you are likely to lose, and very fast.

Q: We poured a lot of money into the parachute training.

Noble: A lot of it wasted. They were good men, but the whole idea was as wet as ~~the~~ *wet*. I wrote letters against it. I was known to be

rabid against it. But they said, "He just has a fixation against them, or something." But the British say that's the thing to do, and at that time ~~anybody~~, anything the British said was a good thing to do ^{it was regarded by a lot of our leaders} in the Navy or Marine Corps ~~was~~ almost like coming out of Mount Olympus. ~~anybody~~. Of course I never was particularly pro-British anyway. Having my roots in Britain I felt like I had a right to criticize them for their faults ~~that~~ if I saw them. So whenever they came up with something I said, "Yes, somebody that always gets defeated is advising this stuff. When did they ever win a battle? With anything." Even in World War I, Zeebrugge, you know, and the Balearic Islands, and Gallipoli -- when did they ever do anything that ever did succeed? They got out of Dunkirk later, right on top of that, which was a disgrace in anybody else's country, but with Britain it's a great thing, a great victory! (laughs)

Q: I don't think we ever will understand why the Germans didn't just wipe them out, right there.

Noble: I'd like to know. (Pause) Well, while I was there in Plans & Policies -- I ~~was~~ ^{was} shifted over from the matériel section, thank the Lord, I was glad to get out of something I didn't know anything about, and I was awfully happy that while I was there I wasn't called upon to know much technical business, that was all done by the Quartermaster Department, and I just stayed with the policy end of it, so I was able to get by with the job, I guess, somehow or other.

Anyway I shifted over to the 3rd section of Plans & Policies ~~as~~
~~assistant to the director for~~
 a while, and finally succeeded ^{to the directorship} for two or three months just before
 I went to the division (the 3rd Division). ~~as the~~ I don't
 know that anything very ^{startling} came up. ~~anything came up,~~
~~anything came up.~~ Also so many things came up
 that to say that any one thing was more important than others is
 pretty hard to do. We were all scrambling then, trying to get men
 and material together, and get enough older officers to command them,
 so as to give them an opportunity to organize these divisions.
~~anything came up.~~ ^{The Corps} never had a
 division before in ~~its~~ ^{its} history.

Q: At this time could we relate this period with the period in
 World War I, when we were in the war, we were trying to get people
 to France. In World War II during this period, was the Marine Corps
 trying to establish what part it would play in the war?

Noble: No, that was decided quite early while I was there. There
 were quite a few conferences about that: where would the ~~Marines~~
 recommend that they be placed in this war? In Europe? With the
 Army in Europe? Or in the Pacific? With the Army in the Pacific?
 Or with the Navy? Or all by itself with the Navy? And the ~~Commandant~~
 was the one that made the decision; he definitely decided that for
 this war the main effort would be with the United States Navy, not
 with the Army at any time, and the theater of the main effort would
 be the Pacific, not the Atlantic or Europe. That's why we were not
 in Europe -- because that was the decision that was made.

They had landing operations over there too, and we ~~could~~ ^{could} foresee that many of those were coming up. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ^{But} they had the equipment, they had plenty of ships to carry them, they only had some short ^{water} distances to go. ^{feasible operations} A really ^{amounted to} sort of wide river crossings.

But these Pacific operations were attacks over hundreds of miles from the sea smack on ^{relatively small} defended places. And there it took some technique, much more, and you couldn't afford to fail. You had to work definitely with the Navy, and I thought we were the only ones trained to do it. In fact we were certainly the only ones that ^{had} played ^{many} problems out there. In the schools we'd already played problems on Guam, on Peleliu, Babelthaup, Dumanquilas Bay, Truk, and I don't know what ^{more} ~~others~~, but several others. So we had all the ^{intelligence} studies on the ~~things~~ ^{things} already made, and even plans of attack. ^{previous problem would necessarily} Not that ~~they~~ ^{they} apply when you actually went to do it ~~they~~ ^{were}, but they'd been used in map problems, and they ~~was~~ something to go by. There were studies made of all the landing beaches and things of that sort. So we thought that's where we belonged, all of us. So did the ~~Commandant~~ ^{Commandant}. ~~and the Commandant~~ ^{and the Commandant}. The Marine Corps did have a say in that. They were asked what was their idea as to where their main effort should be. That meant a lot to us up there, working, getting equipment and ~~men~~ ^{men}, ~~and organizing~~ ^{and organizing} and organizing

things, even procuring land to train on in the United States. We knew we were going in the Pacific, so that solved a lot of little problems. It created a few other problems at the same time. (Pause)

I can't think of anything else while I was at Headquarters there that was particularly outstanding. Of course I was there in the development of the first Higgins boats -- they were the first landing boats that we got. Andrew Higgins. And I went down to help test those on Lake Pontchartrain, Louisiana. Higgins was quite a character. ~~He~~ didn't want to tell us ahead of time -- or the Navy Bureau of Ships, that we worked very closely with -- how he was going to build a boat: he didn't want any plans, he didn't want to be tied up, he wanted a free hand. He'd build it as he went along. ^{he said.} Well, he had already built one that was pretty good as he went along, sort of by ear, so he got a contract that allowed him to do that, which is a little unusual, and the Bureau of Ships, or Supply & Accounts, whoever it was almost tore their hair, "This is no way to do it!" But old Higgins got it across, and we were sort of for Higgins, because he was an entrepreneur and he was a pusher, and sure enough he built those Higgins boats, and they were fast, they were seaworthy, they could hit logs and coral and skid over them, they would get ahead, and they'd come through the surf at such speed that would obviate breaching. They had more speed than the waves had, in other words, and they could run smack on ^{to} the beach, and they didn't have any keel to dig in, and they just slid right up there and landed you on dry land. And we thought that was ^{one of} the most wonderful things we could think of, especially those of us that had landed in ~~these~~ standard boats, where you jumped in and you were up to your shoulders at least, and then the boat began to turn and broach on you!

after the only way you could get in at all was for these bluejackets to put out an anchor at sea and pay it away. And even then, a big sea ~~could~~ snap everything, *or* drag the anchor and turn the boat up on top of you. So any boat that could go through the surf and land you on the beach we were ~~not~~ willing to *recommend* ~~it~~. It was the Navy's money anyway!! ~~that's the way it was.~~

If you have anything in mind, maybe I could comment on it.

Q: No. I was thinking mostly about any of this inter-service rivalry that existed during World War I, when we were getting into the problem of the roles that were going to be played by the different services.

Noble: I don't remember so much of that, no, not after we found we had a job to do and we were practically in the war.

Q: Don't you believe that the Army had so much on their minds about Europe, and that was the big war, that they ~~xx~~ kind of left us off to ourselves?

Noble: Oh, yes, as a matter of fact they had more than they could do. They were quite worried with what they had and everything, and they had the big draft coming up, and they were going to get more soldiers than they knew how to handle, really. And they knew it. They weren't trying to reach out and take in another service. They ~~would~~ would have liked to have another service ~~to~~ help them out, I think.

No, I don't think that was the time that inter-service rivalry was likely to raise its head so much. No at the time when we had two ocean wars.

Douglas

Q: Was there any pressure from Gen. MacArthur to have the Marine Corps come out and work exclusively for him?

Noble: No, not that I know of. In the beginning, you know, he was Marshal in the Philippine Army. He was not in the United States Army.

Q: Right.

Noble: Actually the Japs started after him. Nobody had much communication. You couldn't support him anyway. He was out there all by himself, writing his own communiqués to the United States, telling about his victories and how they fought and fought, and how they succeeded in going backward and backward, and so forth, finally winding up on Corregidor. He never mentioned very much how he sent his planes up ^{at Clark Field at the wrong time} and got clobbered by the Japs, although he had ^{the example of} Pearl Harbor right in front of him. I never thought much of Gen. MacArthur as a ^{tactician.} As a publicist he was first class. As a symbol of something or other I don't know what, he was first class. ^{But} he was all by himself and ~~was~~ able to write his own ticket for a long time. ^{could} I believe I could win almost every battle if I ~~could~~ write the report on it. I'll tell you where he did do wonderfully well, and that was as commander of occupation forces in Japan. That was a masterly job, I think, and that's the only masterly job I ever heard of him doing. Quite the contrary. ~~He was~~ I thought he was out-guessed in Korea, I thought he was wrong in Korea in his tactics, I thought he was wrong in his ^{planning or how} to return to the Philippines. I thought he should have made a better show in the Philippines in the first place. ~~He was~~ ^{admirable} as a publicist,

and ^{as} a figure that appealed to the Japanese, and also his judgment as commander of the occupation forces of Japan -- I thought he was especially good. And I say that in spite of the fact that I think almost any senior officer that was given that job in Japan couldn't help but succeed. It's the kind of a job that I would ~~have~~ ^{conceded}. The kind of job you ^{could hardly} fail at. You have complete control, nobody opposes you. Something like Herbert Hoover feeding the Belgians: he got an awful lot of favorable publicity, and they almost idolized him in the United States for feeding the poor Belgians after World War I. Actually he was put ahead ^{of Belgian Relief} with all the money in the world to spend, and all he had to do was to spend it and have some soup kitchens all over Belgium, which he did, and gained tremendous prestige. It almost elected him president, ~~eventually~~, eventually. ~~He was elected president of the United States.~~

~~Then while I was there, I had an opportunity to get in on the organization of the 3rd Marine Division on the West Coast here, as chief of staff to Gen. Barrett, and Gen. Turnage was to be the assistant division commander. Gen. Shepherd had the 9th Marines out here, and he had just moved into Camp Pendleton with them.~~

^{in Washington}
Then while I was there, I had an opportunity to get in on the organization of the 3rd Marine Division on the West Coast here, as chief of staff to Gen. Barrett, ^{Hal} and Gen. Turnage was to be the assistant division commander. ^{Leahy} Gen. Shepherd had the 9th Marines out here, and he had just moved into Camp Pendleton with them.

Later on we picked up two other infantry regiments, commanded by ^{Now General G.O. living in} Col. Ames, who is now ~~in~~ Coronado, ~~and Col. Cauldwell, who was in Samoa.~~ ^{G.O. B.} Col. Wilson had the artillery regiment.

^{OSCAR W.}
~~I arrived at Camp Elliott in September 1943 as chief of staff. Gen. Vogel with the 2nd ~~and~~ Division was just getting ready to leave for New Zealand. I was the ^{only} member of the ^{projected} 3rd Marine Division there, and I spent about a week trying to get one floor of ~~the~~ a barracks building and a typewriter and some paper, and at least one~~

with
 typist to help me do something. It was just like pulling teeth, nobody *paying much*
 attention to me, ~~and I was the only one of the kind of person~~

~~and I was the only one of the kind of person~~

~~and I was the only one of the kind of person~~

but at least I got

~~and I was the only one of the kind of person~~ -- an office to work in, and a typewriter. ~~and I was the only one of the kind of person~~ I knew

the commanding general, Gen. Barrett, was soon due to come out, and

we were soon due to get a lot of troops and move right in there, and

the whole division headquarters, everything, had to *be* organized from

scratch, had to draw equipment, ~~and I was the only one of the kind of person~~ and then we were going to

bring Gen. Turnage over from Camp Lejeune with his troops. ~~and I was the only one of the kind of person~~

~~and I was the only one of the kind of person~~ all took place, but at first it was only one of the 3rd division,

and that was ME! Absolutely alone, barehanded. I don't know why

I should mention that. ~~and I was the only one of the kind of person~~ That would be try of anybody that tries to

start anything, of course. But I know I was one worried guy. I

couldn't see anything moving at all, and I was expected to start

things moving!! I didn't have anything to move anything with!!!

Q: Must have been an awful helpless feeling.

Noble: Oh it was, it was terrible, I was the most unhappy person
 you ever saw. Well, Barrett and Turnage and the rest of the troops
 eventually came out, and we began to build. And Barrett started
 originating things like he always did, and he topped up many things
 and made the rest work on them too. SOPs for divisions -- there was
 nothing to go on. For instance, a standard operating procedure on
 how you are going to organize your division exchange, distributed
 among the ~~units~~, and *but* people in *to operate them*, to buy the stuff,
 and write the regulations. ~~Standard Operating Procedures~~ which

~~we did right then.~~

~~_____~~ ^a lot of these things had to be written up for the first time, with no files to go on ^{and} ^{around who} nobody else had done it. A lot of these people just got together and went out and did it later. They did things later as they went along, and they didn't have anything on paper. The 1st Division did a lot of scrambling in spite of the fact that it was more or less established. But they did a lot of scrambling, and so the the 2nd. They did things and got out of it ~~_____~~. The 3rd Division was ^{later} characterized by having something in writing, something to guide (us) on everything we did.

~~_____~~ I hope whoever listens to this -- if anybody does -- won't think I am yelling about my own outfit too much. But the division was known outside the division as a very smooth operating outfit, in the planning, in the fighting end of it, in the administration and everything else: it was very smooth-operating because we'd spent a lot of time on these Standard Operating Procedures. Every order that could be ^{written} that would ^{apply invariably} was made standard operating procedure. It ^{then} only had to be referred to. ^{all of this} ~~And that~~ was in great measure due to Gen. Barrett. We made standard operating procedures as to how to load ships; naval gunfire control and the details of it; we maneuvered over Southern California here as much as we had time, and then we got on ships and proceeded to New Zealand in January 1943. ~~And then~~ I believe ^{it was} the next June we went to Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands from New Zealand. While we were in New Zealand we continued the training: we were divided up into big camps, -- regimental camps, ~~_____~~ -- over Northern New Zealand. And the experience was quite novel and quite new and very pleasant. The New Zealanders were particularly good to us. I know the wives of the officers of the New Zealand Army who were fighting with the

Army
 British ^{Army} against Rommel in North Africa, got together and got their husbands' shotguns ~~in the pool~~, and put them in a pool ^{where} any of our officers who had an opportunity to ^{hunt could} draw the shotguns ^{with a} certain allowance of shells, ^{and} go hunting. A great many did. I thought that was very nice. Also they gave all kinds of teas to our men around all these camps. They were very quiet women. ^{They} made homemade cookies and brought them, and all they wanted to do was just make the troops feel at home in New Zealand. There was no fanfare about any of it, but it was especially well done. I don't see how they could have done ^{it} ~~any~~ more gracefully.

We had a maneuver there, landing operations among other things, and then we got on ships and went to Guadalcanal, where we occupied ^{Leavenworth} ~~Seven B~~ ^{with the} a big coconut grove, and were ~~we~~ bombed almost every night by one lone plane from Rabaul: a Jap came over -- we called him Washing Machine Charlie -- and he dropped a bomb or two every time, and he would hit somebody almost every time. Didn't do much damage. I don't know whether we got him or not, but he droned around there every night and we'd all listen to him, and get in holes too, because ^{we} ~~we~~ never knew when a bomb ^{might come down} ~~might come down~~.

Well, in the Solomons, that's all been written up in history, and I don't know that I can add much to it. If I can think of anything that might go into chinks of history, I would say it.

Gen. Barrett, division commander of the 3rd Division, was made amphibious corps commander, ~~and~~ ^{he} took me over to be the corps chief of staff, and we immediately began the planning of the Bougainville campaign. Before that we had landed and made reconnaissance ~~in New Georgia and Bougainville~~ ^{in New Georgia} ~~Treasury Island, and Choiseul.~~ ^{Treasury Island, and Choiseul.} There were a few Japs around those

places, but not many. The bulk of the Japanese forces in that part of the Solomons was in the southern part of Bougainville, where they had an airstrip. ~~and there was a roughly half-way between New Britain and Bougainville and the main part of the Solomons.~~

Barrett was the one that ^{William F.} made the plan of landing at Bougainville which was adopted. ^{by Admiral Halsey} Other plans that ~~the Japs had thought about~~ were offered to him ~~by the Japs~~ ^{involved} were landing right on the end ^{of Bougainville} where the Japs were, where the airstrip was, ~~and take it over and take~~

~~the airstrip.~~ And Barrett said, "Why do that when you can by-pass it?" And he pointed out that the island had a very small waist ~~there~~ and if you could establish one of our strips before they could reach ^{us} in force through the jungle ~~they would have good roads~~ we could have planes flying before they could get there, and then we would be just as good as they were or better: we had more planes to fly to it. There were many arguments to it, and he won out, and we wrote up the plan of attack that way. And that's where it was carried out, exactly. ~~It was carried out at Empress Augusta Bay.~~ First we made a reconnaissance by putting people ashore: that was a sort of ^{novelty} ~~a thing~~, but it worked. We found out more or less where the Japs were and where they were not, and landed ⁱⁿ ~~on~~ Empress Augusta Bay, and you know the rest -- we built up the airstrip and that was the beginning of the end for the Japanese in the Solomon Islands or in New Britain, or New Ireland. It just bottled them up for the whole area or almost -- at least it cut off one arm. ~~That plan of attack, not only in the main but in detail, was done by Gen. Barrett, he was responsible, and that was just before he died. It was carried out exactly that way.~~ When ^{Gen Barrett} ~~he~~ died, ^{A.A.} Gen. Vandegrift -- who was in

Australia and had captured Guadalcanal in the first place, with the 1st Division -- had been appointed Commandant of the Marine Corps. And before he went to take ~~his~~ office, he came over to take over the command of the amphibious force to capture Bougainville. And he got there I think probably a week or two before it started. We had had the plans all written and the loading had started when he arrived. ~~there~~. I remember I met him when he arrived, he and his chief of staff, and I said, "I have all the plans and they are beginning to be executed, we are loading the ships this morning," ~~_____~~

~~_____~~ And his answer was, "Well, it had better be all ready!!" (laughs) They didn't have anything to do, really, but just sit. And then he went up. ^{to command the attack on Bougainville.} Meanwhile he had appointed Gen.

Boys. ~~_____~~ Geiger to take over the Corps after he left for Washington, but he kept command ^{himself} until the landing had been made, and then Geiger came the next day. So I shifted ~~to~~ being the assistant to Geiger. ~~_____~~

~~_____~~ Then Geiger and ~~myself~~ ^I stayed in Bougainville and finished it up.

I went up to Bougainville with Gen. Vandegrift, (the rest of them stayed in Guadalcanal) the day of the landing, and Gen. Vandegrift and ~~myself~~ went ashore; he stayed ashore several hours, then on a boat and back to the ship. He darn near got swamped right on the beach there: the surf began to break ^{heavily} ~~there~~, the boat broached and everything ^{suddenly looked bleak.} ~~else~~, and I was standing on the beach, helpless, and I could see the Commandant of the Marine Corps about to be upended right underneath the broached boat. I was very much worried for him, but he got away very neatly after a while. (Pause)

Q: After the operations on Bougainville . . .

Noble: . . . Yes, I went back, ^{to Guadalcanal} and technically joined the 3rd Marine
Division again as assistant division commander. Right away, in March
 1944 they put me in command of an operation that nobody knows anything
 about. It was the ~~landing operation~~ ^{landing} of the attack on the island of
 Emirau. We didn't know whether there were Japs there or not. The ^{(now Gen) JAWN}
 infantry was composed of the raider battalions under Col. ~~Shapley~~ ^{Shapley}.
~~That was the infantry.~~ And then we had a regiment of artillery, ^{other}
~~believe,~~ and all the ^{other} fixings, ^{including Army Field Hospital} There were about 10,000. ^{Admiral Lawrence} Reifsnider
 was the naval officer in command of the attack forces.

Emirau is an island situated between ~~New Britain and~~ ^{No,}
 New Hanover, which is in New Britain, and Mussau, about three degrees
 from the Equator, and it's right on the ^{sea} line of supply to the Japs in
 Rabaul. The idea of taking that island was to establish an air base
 and a PT base, and thereby bottle up all the Japs in the Solomons.
 And that's exactly what happened. The Japanese had been on Emirau,
 but they'd left, and when we got there we didn't know whether there
 were any Japs there or not, so we went in with tanks and ^{other} regular
 assault, ^{forces} and the gunners ^{had their} with fingers on their trigger, looking for
 some opposition, and then we would shoot, but we didn't want to shoot
 the poor villagers and ^{later} find there were no Japs there. A good thing
 we didn't ^{shoot} because there wasn't a single Jap.

~~What~~ ^{solved} the whole ^{problem} was, while the boats were
 going in, here were two men, half-clothed, natives -- it turned out
 to be -- who came strolling right up the beach at one end, just

walking along looking at the ships ~~out there~~. They didn't know what they were walking into! And we all ^{came to realize at once} ~~found out~~ that they were ^{not} Japs.

~~They weren't armed~~ ^{and} ~~they~~ looked like fishermen, so the ~~boys~~ ^{men} in the boats the ~~machine guns~~ ^{guns} in the LVTs and the destroyers right on our flank didn't open up on them. They That saved them was their nonchalance walking down that beach.

~~We~~ ^{landed} ~~established~~ an all around defense ~~and established~~ the PT base, and ~~with~~ ^{our} 6 Seabee ~~battalions we started~~, and

~~they~~ built the airstrip -- a 9000 foot jet fighter strip on the island of Emirau. And it was done in 20 days' time. ^{On the whole it was a neat} ~~That was the neatest~~

little operation. I've often said, ^{that we} "If I just had a little bit of ^{opposition} ~~there~~ ^{ammunition}, I think I could ~~have made~~ ^{it} a big battle out of ~~that~~!"


And won it too! But it did bottle up the Japs. Our PT boats got out there on ~~lines~~ ^{the Japanese line of communication and}, the submarines refueled ~~up there~~ ^{at the base}, even while I was there. ~~Had~~ ^{was} a little naval station ~~there~~ established, and airplanes began to use that strip within ~~20 days'~~ ^{3 weeks'} time.






~~There were no more Japanese~~ operations in the Solomon Islands, or in New Britain, or in New Ireland. That finished it. I was calling it putting a stopper in the bottle, and that's what that was. But inasmuch as nothing happened up there, I don't think it's ever even been written up.

[ED note: See Vol II, ^{USMC} History of USMC WWII operations]

Q: Nothing written up on it.

Noble: There is one thing that might be interesting, because it has an application always, and that is the propensity up to that time

to put somebody in charge of an operation, ~~and then~~ hold him responsible, issue him orders saying so, order him what to do, ~~and then~~ give him troops to do it, ~~and engineers to accomplish it,~~ and then ~~have strings on them,~~ ^{establish} direct communication with ~~these~~ specialists, and ^{keep them} under the direct control of higher headquarters back home. That same thing was done in the orders for me to go to Emirau. I was given complete authority, and then there were reservations made that ^{certain units had a right to communicate} ~~that they had to write up communications~~ directly to the commander in chief, without ^{going} through me, ^{or informing me.} ~~and~~ at the risk of losing that job I remember 

End of Side 1, Tape 1, Session III.

→ See pp 90.

same JP 8950

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Tape 1, Side 2 - Session III.

[REDACTED]

Telling ~~to~~ them frankly that if I was going to be in command I ~~was going~~ ^{wished} to be in command, ~~and~~ every message ^{should} ~~had to~~ have my approval, ~~it had~~ ^{and} to go through my communications setup, ~~and~~ (if anybody disobeyed me, *then* they asked me what I would do, and so I said, "I'd send them home on the next boat."

[REDACTED]

After a short but painful conference they said, "Well, we'll send you." So they did send me. With misgivings, I think.

It developed that ~~and~~ I didn't have any trouble with ^{the specialists} ~~them~~

at all. But ~~when~~ ^{there} there wasn't any question as to who ~~was~~ ^{the} boss ~~there~~ ^{there} I was the local boss. ^{McNire}

Any task organization should be given one commander if you are going to send ~~him~~ ^{it} away, ~~and it really~~ ^{and possibly out of track, and all activities} should go through him -- don't dilute him down and be two-faced with him.

This is especially true when we must engage an enemy in battle.

Q: You kept the job just the same.

Noble: It was a wonder I did. It was touch and go, I think.

~~I think April the 9th . . .~~
~~After the Emura mission was completed,~~
~~then~~ I resumed my duties as assistant division commander of the 3rd Marine Division. Gen. Turnage was the division commander.

^{on June 2, 1945}
We left Guadalcanal for the Marianas to take part in the Central Pacific campaign. That was the ~~end~~ ^{end} of the Solomons Campaign.

Q: Now before you jump off for Guam, what was the condition of your troops at this time? The physical condition.

Noble: Good. We had malaria -- quite a bit of malaria -- but we were beginning to control it with atabrine. Everybody was taking atabrine steadily. So you might have had malaria but you didn't have the symptoms, ^{and} ~~so~~ it didn't interfere with you. When you stopped taking atabrine, ^{some} ~~a lot~~ would break out with malaria, even after they got back to the United States. But that atabrine was one of the biggest things that was invented at that time. [REDACTED]

Q: How was your equipment?

Noble: It was adequate, it was all right. We didn't have any ^{serious} shortages. We had plenty of ammunition all the time, we had very good food, we even had post exchange supplies -- we were really making war deluxe. The last war was, really, made more or less deluxe. You didn't have to go for long periods of time deprived of things, you even got beer. Officers usually had their nice little old mess if they stayed in a place a week or two. Ships were always coming in with the hold ~~full~~ of beer. When you compare the way we ~~had to live~~ ^{with} ~~as against~~ the way these poor Japs had to live, ^{there} ~~they were~~ two different worlds. We also fought them with overwhelming force. So let's not start patting ourselves on the back too much for the great victories we were winning. Most of those victories -- by far most of them -- were accomplished against people not as well armed, [REDACTED] Numerically, our mobility, our

arms, our ammunitions, our food, ^{medical attention} -- mention anything -- they were way down the line. And the way they fought ~~me~~ was really inspiring. ^{to me I can't foresee where any people will ever} ~~fight any~~ better than the Japanese did. They fought till they died, and they had nothing much to fight with. The end was very plainly in sight for all of them. ^{It was "for the Emperor."} I am not sure the Japanese would do it again.

Q: Probably not.

Noble: They have different ideals now than they did then. They ^{were} ~~are~~ very tightly disciplined by their religion.

Well, we got on the ships and stayed on the ships for, it seems to me, indefinitely before we got to Guam. Actually we left Guadalcanal on the 2nd of June and we didn't land on Guam until the 21st of July, ~~and we were on the ship the whole time, except for a few stops for maybe a day or so at such places as Eniwetok, Kwajalein, but most of the time just fly plying backward and forward towards Guam, and back again, turning around and waiting for the situation at Saipan to get more or less settled before we took on Guam.~~ ^{there were}

~~Then~~ ^{finally} when we landed on Guam we had opposition, and they were dropping shells in the water when we landed. Matter of fact, ^{on the beach and} ~~I got~~ tied up in ^{my boat} ~~my boat~~ -- it was an amphibian tractor -- while they were shelling the beach, and I thought, "What a hell of a place to get caught in!" But there we were. Didn't get hit. The landing itself, although against a modicum of opposition you might say, was perfect. I think that if anybody looks back at history they'll find that that was one of the most perfectly executed attacks against opposition.

~~There was never a~~

hitch in timing, supply, or anything of the sort. Not a bit of a hitch. The enemy held the heights all around us there, we were in a pocket, and it was very difficult to get out of it. We had to take one little part ^{of the high ridge} after another, and I had a feeling that some of the higher echelons got a little impatient because we were in that pocket: they felt we weren't going to get out. We never had any such feeling. But we'd rather maneuver out than ~~we would~~ try to scale cliffs with ladders and ~~have~~ have the Japs push the ladders back. There were easier ways to do it, but it would take a little bit of ~~time~~ time. Which we did. And finally what happened was the best thing that could have happened. Just as we were getting out, the

Japs in desperation took all their reserves, which was six of their ^{battered} battalions, and attacked one night. ~~And~~ they just threw those six battalions away and ^{it} they broke their back. From then on all we did was just get up, and there was just sporadic fighting until we

cleaned out the island. There are two or three ways of wiping out an island, ^{scattered resistance or} ~~too~~. You can rush ahead down a road, ^{or trail and finally} ~~the~~ put people in back ^{of the enemy area} without much opposition, but then you spend the rest -- two or three weeks or a month -- having ^{enemy soldiers} ~~people~~ shoot at you that you've left ^{around} in the woods, ~~spaces in between~~, and everybody is ^{then} in the midst

of a guerrilla warfare. You could do that. Or you can take it slower, and if you have ^{sufficient infantry} ~~the troops~~, you more or less form a line and sweep through and pick all opposition up as you go. That whole question came up at Guam: which should we do to finish out Guam?

And Gen. Turnage -- and I certainly agreed with him -- thought that the thing to do was to sweep, and we did sweep. And I forget how long it took us to take it, but not very long. ^{And} We cleaned up the whole island, ^{more sure movement} ~~and~~ After that you never saw a Jap in the rear, not a

one. Some of them got down on the cliffs, and ^{remained harmless;} ~~they~~ ^{were} still picking them up years after! But they never bothered anybody. ~~The~~ ^{The} decisive battle had been fought, ~~right~~ ^{right} on the beach, right in the beachhead.

Q: This was ^{when} ~~the~~ the six battalions hit you.

Noble: Yes, that was the climax, and it speeded ^{things} ~~things~~ up, because otherwise we would have had ~~to~~ to chase those six battalions down piece by piece and have ~~some~~ quite some battle ~~was~~ every now and then, and maneuver all around all over the island. As it was, they came to us one night and were completely obliterated. By ^{our} ~~the~~ next night there weren't any left. We killed most of them, and the people were laughing and shooting.

~~It was very pitiful in a way. They were completely lost, disorganized, some of them didn't even have rifles, that is, after they'd made that attack.~~

I succeeded in command of the division for about a month, and then I was sent back to the States. ^(over my written protest.) The Commandant said that I'd been over two years ^{in the Pacific} and the Marine Corps and the Army had gotten together and decided that that ^{two years} was long enough for any person to take that, and I needed a little rest, so he was going to take me back to Camp Lejeune and put me in command of the training command there. And that's what he did. I arrived there in November of 1944.

Noble: You were probably deeply involved also in some of the construction going on at Camp Lejeune, weren't you? Or was the camp already built by then?

Noble: No, it was just about built, almost as much as it is now. *Gahn*
Gen. Marston was the Camp commander, and I had the training command, which was under the operational control of the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

We made some innovations there in that training command; mainly it was to set up a sort of a chain ^{of} localities for training troops faster, to cut down on their marching time from one ^{activity} ~~locality~~ to another. ^{Activities} ~~Localities~~ were put adjacent to ^{one another} ~~each other~~, around a ^{rough two mile} circle. We had a virgin forest to work on, so nothing was in the way, and we could put on all these little ^{training activities} ~~things~~ that we wanted to ~~put on~~, and ^{the troops could} ~~they'd~~ go right from one to another. The troops were not only less bored that way, but they got a lot more training ~~and~~ a lot less time. I think that system should always be employed where possible, because you just get about double the amount of instruction in the same length of time. *This was somewhat of an innovation I'm told.*

I don't believe there is anything else of any great note that took place at the training command. We took the recruits from Parris Island, and we separated them according to MOS, and gave them ^{additional} ~~new~~ MOSs, or what amounted to that, and trained each in his specialty as much as we could, and then we'd get the draft calls to send them out, and we'd send out so many cooks, so many carpenters, so many this that and the other. When they arrived ^{out there (Pacific)} it was very easy for personnel to just distribute them exactly in the places where they ^{were needed} ~~belonged~~. It ~~was~~ made a very smooth operation, and that was the *first*

Time the

Marine Corps had ever done such smooth operating, ~~as that. --~~

Not just at this point particularly, but in the second world war.

Before that they'd been relieving people by units -- large units.

After they would just send replacement bodies.

But this MOS business is the ~~same~~ if you've got the machinery to

do it, and now that we've got these IBM machines, or whatever you

call them, they make it very simple, so long as a bomb doesn't

drop on the machine and obliterate it. That would sort of ~~pie~~ pie

pi things I think, and throws us back several hundred years!

Q: Thank you very much, General.

End of Side 2, Tape 1, Session III.

Tape 1, Side 1 - Session IV - 23 May 68.

Noble: In February 1946 I was transferred from the training command at Camp Lejeune to the Marine Garrison Forces, 14th Naval District, where I stayed for six months. Headquarters was at Pearl Harbor, and the duties were ^{to} ~~reducing~~ and reorganizing the garrisons in the whole Pacific area, ~~because~~ ^{because} the war was over and the troops were being withdrawn to the United States, and that meant a complete reorganization of the Pacific garrisons. [REDACTED]

A great many of those garrisons where we had marines were eliminated completely. Others were reduced in size, to conform to peacetime operations. It wasn't a very cheerful duty. The depressing thing about it, really, was the amount of equipment we had to leave to simply waste away and ^{rust} ~~rot~~ in all these places. [REDACTED]

Q: There was no way to get it back.

Noble: It not only would cost a great deal to get it back, but then it would have to be repaired and stored in the United States, which is a costly thing. Also I feel very strongly that the automotive ^{and electrical} ^{particularly} industries ^{forward} wanted to go ^{stuff} on -- they didn't want that ^{stuff} back on the market any of those trucks and tractors, all sorts of equipment; radio equipment. It had already been manufactured and paid for, and it was water under the bridge: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] All those reasons added up to the fact that we just left the stuff out there. Probably best for our economy in the long run.

I don't think there is very much else to say about that period. There wasn't anything particularly constructive. It was just a mopping up operation.

From there I was transferred, after six months, for a short tour of duty with the 1st Marine Division in Northern China, where I stayed for about four months until I was promoted to Major General, and that promoted me right out of my job. I had to return to the States.

But I was assistant division commander ^{and} ~~in~~ our area, ~~xxx~~ as is known, was roughly the Tientsin-Peking-Chinwangtao area of North China.

The situation in China at that time was that the nationalists, headed by Chiang Kai-shek's government, occupied the big cities in China and roughly any railroads in China that connected those cities, and the ports of China. But they had practically no strength ~~any~~ ~~where~~ in the interior ~~of China~~. The communists occupied all the interior of China and made habitual raids on the railroads by blowing them up, and although ^{the roads usually} ~~they~~ were repaired within 24 hours ~~in most cases~~ they returned and broke them up again. That happened all the time in our area, and you couldn't go 200 yards outside of the city of Tientsin without very likely getting a potshot from a communist.

We played a little golf on the golf course there, and carried a carbine in the golf bag along with the golf sticks. But after a bullet or so popping overhead, several of us decided that we'd better cut out that kind of golf. And we did!

Q: Almost like a lesson in small unit tactics, to play golf.

Noble: It ~~was~~ certainly was. If you didn't mind being shot at it was all right, but we found it interfered with our concentration.

~~He (laughs)~~

Noble: The situation there in China, I thought, in some ways had a parallel to what happened later in Vietnam. In South Vietnam the interior is full of enemy individuals, the Vietcong, who are living with and living on the inhabitants, the farmers. That's the same thing that was happening in China with the communists. And although the Chinese North Army swept through a good deal of North China, ^{while I was there} the communists would just go into hiding and give way in front of them and then close in on their line of supplies, and they'd have to come back to their railroads and their cities. That was the situation when I left it. It was a very interesting setup, but it looked like a sure communist victory sooner or later. The troops that can keep their morale up and live among the people themselves have a great advantage.

After that, when I returned to the United States, I was given command of the Training Command Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet. It was called the Troop Training Unit at that time. Headquarters was at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, but most of our work was in connection with the amphibious group and the ^{Naval} amphibious force, that had their headquarters and all of their ships and personnel in Coronado. It was a little bit awkward to be so far separated because we had a lot of work to do together, and I recommended -- and it was approved in Washington -- that we move the headquarters from the Marine Corps Recruit Depot to Coronado, where it is today.

There in Coronado the duties were essentially the same as the present command there. There were classes held for students that were sent ^{from all services} ~~and problems~~ -- ^P practical problems with mockups, and then exercises on the Silver Strand and landing operations at Pendleton.

We taught Army personnel and Navy personnel as well as ~~Marines~~ ^M. It ~~was~~ is an all service outfit to teach landing operations, and it turned out to be a very good school, and I see it's still continued and I am sure it's very necessary, particularly for the Navy even more than for ~~Marines~~ ^M. There they get an opportunity to see what it is ^{like} and to use their ships of the amphibious force, and use them intelligently.

In February 1948 I was transferred to the recruit depot at Parrie Island, South Carolina, where I stayed for two years. [REDACTED]

There have ^{since} been very few changes made. I believe some of the training may be more ^{extensive} ~~excellent~~, more advanced in some ways, ^{but} ~~and~~ in other ways there ^{were} ~~are~~ some very good things in training, ^{for which there} ~~that it~~ is no longer time [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The essential thing is that the morale, the making of a marine, ^{the indoctrination} is taking place today much like it always has been ^{long} ~~even~~ since before I came in ^{to} the Corps. It's a very sound basis that we are on, and I've always felt that we should jealously guard it and look very ^{long and hard at proposed changes} ~~very~~ That I am conservative about. [REDACTED]

Q: I think two of our strongest institutions are the recruit depot and the Basic School.

Noble: I agree with you, because I am fully convinced that ~~the~~ power always comes from the broad base up to the peak, not from the top on down. Just like battles are won ^{primarily} by squads, not by staffs and

commanders. All the staff and commander does is to plan ^{and coordinate} the big operation and give the people down at the bottom an opportunity to fight. If they don't win, nothing is won.

I had a very wonderful ^{by instructive} ~~two years~~ ^{at Parris Island.} ~~there and a very instructive~~ ^{while there} ~~one~~ I made quite a study of what I call Brotherhood Training.

History has a great deal to offer, and I think ~~there~~ ^{it} should be delved into much more in our schools. We have many examples in history of organizations using certain mechanisms and techniques.

~~to further a feeling of brotherhood among our people. For example~~ ^{groups of men. This is particularly} ~~True of religious and lodges;~~

~~The Catholic Church has been an organization with a great many ceremonies and a great many teachings, a great many forbidden things and a great many approved things, a great many ~~work~~ ^{work} forms -- all of which would keep the organization together, and to instill a spiritual brotherhood among them. And it's been very successful over many hundreds of years. That's just one example. Other examples of course are the regular brotherhoods that we have, like the Masons and the Odd Fellows, the Elks, the Eagles, the Red Men, and anything else you can think of. They all have their own mechanisms. Some of those mechanisms can be used to train recruits -- not all of them. But certain things promote esprit, certainly well known things. And I do think that that could be gone into more fundamentally than it has in the past. I did it but I never wrote it up. I used as much of it as I could.~~

While I was at Parris Island, a few things happened that might be of interest. We brought the training of ~~women~~ ^{W/M} Marines down there for the first time, ~~when I was there.~~ We had to make special barracks for them, and ~~the~~ ^{work up a} ~~work up a~~ ~~complex~~ ^{complex} of training syllabus for them that would suit them and what they had to do.

Also while I was there we integrated for the first time the black people in ^{the} Marine Corps ^{recruit platoons right} ~~right in~~ with the white trainees. ^{This was done} ~~immediately~~, as soon as they arrived ^{at} ~~the~~ ^{officers' club}. I believe I said some time ago that before that time ^{we} ~~they~~ would wait for ^{the} ~~a~~ number of colored troops to build up to the proper size ^{of a recruit platoon}, and then they trained as a ^{separate} unit. While I was there the NCO clubs ^{also} were opened up to the colored non commissioned officers, ~~and the recruits were mixed up with the~~ ^{This innovation} ~~white~~. It not only ^{produced} ~~had~~ no unfavorable reaction among the Marines, ^{but also} ~~at all~~, it had no unfavorable reaction among the ^{civilian citizens} ~~people~~ of South Carolina in the vicinity. Of course I consulted the ^{civilian} ~~leaders~~ first and told them what I was going to do and got their advice and promises of help to try to stop any ^{adverse} criticisms of it. It seemed like ^{integration} ~~the whole thing~~ was ^{due} ~~going to~~ take place sooner or later anyway in this country, certainly in the Armed Forces, and I thought that it should take place in the Armed Forces ^{first}, ~~and the sooner the better~~ -- as soon as the public would stand for it. ~~That happened while I was there~~ ^{And of course} ~~we did~~ expand the depot in many ways ^{during my stay} -- ~~we~~ ^{erected} ~~made~~ some new buildings ^{for one thing} ~~there~~. One of them was a memorial building ^{which embodies large} ~~which is still there~~, which ^{showing} ~~has got the~~ ~~plaque~~ ~~plaques~~ of the history of the Marine Corps' landing operations, ~~which is a permanent part of the building which nobody could tear down~~. I think recruit depots can stand a great deal of historical reminders -- it's very fine for their training. The inspiration of Marine Corps history on recruits is very marked. All somebody has to do is explain it to them, and they are right ready to receive it.

^{Base} I was transferred from there in August 1950 to the Marine ~~Barracks~~ at Camp Pendleton. There I was present from the beginning of the Korean buildup. We ~~was~~ were frantically getting out the

Eddie

regular organizations headed by Gen. Craig to Korea to prevent what Army troops there were in Korea from being pushed into the sea down at the lower end of the peninsula, ~~which~~ ^{we} were very much worried about ^{this} at the time. And then ~~bringing in~~ ^{we brought} Marine reserves from all directions, ~~and giving~~ ^{gave} them a minimum amount of training and sent ^{overseas} them as replacements. And new units. It was a forerunner ~~of the~~ recent Vietnam buildup that took place at Pendleton.

While I was there, there was a federal suit instituted to determine the water rights ~~of~~ ^{to} the Santa Margarita River. Without the water from that valley it's doubtful that Pendleton could continuously be used as a ~~secret depot~~ ^{large training} base. The other big water users around there were just as anxious to get the water as it came down ~~to~~ that valley, and thousands of people were buying up land along the watershed higher up, and with pumps sapping out the water before it could get down ^{to us}. ~~So that was very much in need of settlement,~~ So the federal suit was started ~~while I was there~~, and the fact that that suit was in progress I think delayed a great deal of money for building at Camp Pendleton, because the chairman of the ^{House} Armed Forces Committee, Representative Vinson, ^{Congressman CARL} said that he would not approve a great buildup at Pendleton so long as the supply of water was unsure. But now that suit has been ~~made or less~~ settled, I understand, and I see nothing to hold back the buildup as much as ^{was} done in the past. They are very much in need of more modern buildings

While I was there I was in command of the base and the Fleet Marine Force units in training, both. Wearing those two hats sometimes became a little embarrassing, because I had two bosses I tried to satisfy. One was Headquarters Marine Corps ^{in regard to} the base itself, and the other was the Commanding General FMFPac, who wanted the

quickly,
units there trained, and sometimes the interests clashed a little. But by diligent hard work, and lying awake at night, you learn how to avoid confrontations.

In August 1951 I was transferred to the Department of the Pacific up in San Francisco, a command that no longer exists.

This department was originally organized, as you know, as an adjunct to Headquarters Marine Corps *in Washington* to take care of administration of Marines on the West Coast and with the Pacific Fleet. It was supposed to lift a great deal of detail burden from Washington, D.C. on housekeeping, and small transfers of personnel. It was quite useful, I think, especially in times when communication wasn't as ready as it is now. It had nothing to do with Fleet Marine Force Pacific except to support them on the various bases. But the recruit depot in San Diego and Marine Barracks at Camp Pendleton, Twenty-Nine Palms, San Francisco and Ionia Island and all the other little *outlets* things including the detachments in the Pacific, *Fleet* and the *M* Marines in the garrison *P* in the Pacific, all came under that Department.

It was quite an opportunity for the Marine Corps to become known in San Francisco and that part of California, and I think we had gained quite a good deal of prestige there. I was rather sorry to see that activity close for that reason, although I don't question the wisdom of it.

From there, in August 1952, I was sent to the Netherlands as chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group at The Hague, where I stayed for two years. This was entirely different from anything that I had ever done in the Marine Corps. It was a semi-diplomatic job in a foreign country. I had a staff with *significant* sections of the Army and the Navy and the Air Force on it. Our program in the Netherlands

80. 18
130

amounted to about one billion dollars worth of equipment. It covered ships, which we delivered to the Netherlands Navy, and airplanes which we delivered from time to time to their Air Force, and artillery and small arms to their Army. We also brought over experts and built or refurbished an ammunition factory where small arms ammunition was made in the Netherlands, and built from the ground up an airplane jet engine repair facility near the Fokker Air Manufacturing Company. These were a few of the big things. I think it was a very fine thing, although it was rather costly to the United States. That period is, I understand, drawing to a close now, and those countries have

Public sufficient equipment and sufficient means to go ahead and furnish their own armed forces. Of course the sooner we can stop spending dollars in those countries, the better for our ~~economy~~ *balance of payments*.

While we were there we were able, even my small headquarters, to head up relief for the tremendous flood that the Netherlands had, ~~while I was there~~. It was the biggest flood, ~~that~~ *and* broke more sea dikes, ~~than~~ *than* they had ^{had} in 300 years, ~~and~~ *and* none of their engineers *apparently* thought it could happen. It was very much a catastrophe, and by being on the spot we were able to head the relief -- army helicopters, engineers, amphibian tractors, all sorts of equipment poured in from our Army in Germany, and it was quite a new experience for me.

Although we were independent of the State Department, the *Military* Assistance *Advisory Group* was ~~dependent~~ *directed* along with the economic adviser head -- ~~the head of economic aid~~ -- to form what is known as "Country Team" a ~~company~~ team, with the Ambassador as chairman. In other words, the Ambassador was chairman of a team of two independent spending agencies: one was the Military Assistance. That in itself was rather

interesting. It just happened that the ambassadors that were in the Netherlands at the time I was there -- ^{Selden} Ambassador Chapin, and later Ambassador Matthews -- were both very fine career diplomats.

In September 1954 I returned to the Marine Corps base at Camp Lejeune. I might say in passing that sometimes these diplomatic jobs are rather hard to give up, because if the Ambassador and the State Department think you are doing a decent job, they recommend that you be kept on for a while, and the services have a hard time refusing them a request of that kind. I was up against that and had to go against the Ambassador's letter ~~and all sort of things~~, and ^{request} the Commandant of the Marine Corps to get me out of that job. After all I was a Marine, and I wanted to get back in the Marine Corps. (Pause)

My return to the command at Camp Lejeune was to my mind merely to get me back into the Marine Corps duties and brush up a little bit on Marine Corps administration prior to a hoped for assignment that I eventually got as Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic. That took place in September 1955, and I retired in November 1956.

As commanding general of the Fleet Marine Force Atlantic, I don't think there was anything ~~so~~ worthy of a great ~~deal~~. *note.*

We were worried about the Mediterranean, and we were organizing a battalion ^{combat team to send} ~~and putting it~~ on a ship ^{to} ~~out there~~ in the Mediterranean, ^{and later landed in Lebanon.} ~~which later landed.~~ It was a battalion landing team. Otherwise, our time was taken up with the 2nd ^D Division training in Lejeune and the training of the other headquarters outfits, and also the aviation on the East Coast, and in exercises in the ^{Cuba} ~~Caribbean~~ and Vieques area. ~~in the Vieques-Culebra area. That's what it amounted to.~~

have been giving *summarizing* *40-*
 I ~~started to give~~ some thought ~~to summing up~~ my whole ~~30~~ years' career, and ~~in summing up~~, I believe I should first say that my whole career, in my opinion, was a well rounded one, and it certainly was complete, because I played the whole hand out to the end, and retired for age on my 62nd birthday. For some unaccountable reason I was always sort of glad that that happened!

I had had an opportunity *PH* which is not given to many. I had the opportunity of commanding practically all the big bases that the Marine Corps had, *except Quantico*.

Q: You missed Quantico.

Noble: Camp Lejeune, Parris Island, the training command at Camp Lejeune, the training command here in San Diego and Camp Pendleton, and the Department of the Pacific. ~~That's practically everything . . .~~

Q: And FMFLant.

Noble: And FMFLant. I think that's practically everything except . . .

Q: . . . Supply depots!

Noble: (laughs) If I were to choose a new career right now, I really could ask for nothing more interesting or more constructive or more rewarding -- not monetary-wise, because you don't go into the service for money; if you want to make money you'd better get into business: that's where money is made. That's a career of its own.

I've always considered the military ~~as~~ profession as a very humane and necessary profession. It requires a great deal of high-mindedness to keep your feet on the ground. I've explained my ~~attitude~~ ^{attitude} ~~profession~~ to civilians sometimes as being similar to ^{that of} a surgeon. When a human being has a disease that threatens his life, ^{or well-being} the emergency often revolves around the operation done by a skilled surgeon who has spent his life preparing himself to do that -- to save the human being ^{from debilitation or death} ~~life~~. A regular military officer is, I think, in a rather parallel position. When the national health fails to the extent that something drastic has got to be done to save the Constitution from dying, ^{or threatened destruction} then the trained professional military man is just like the surgeon -- he must step in and perform whatever operation is necessary to make ~~is~~ the patient well again. I've never looked upon it as being a destructive profession, ~~only in a minor way~~. That often surprises some people.

Although I didn't have a chance at the top job -- ⁽Commandant of the Marine Corps -- that never worried me in the slightest, and I've never felt the slightest jealousy, because of my very capable seniors that did get it. Gen. ~~Cates~~ ^{qualified and} and Gen. Shepherd were all well senior to me, and all well ~~deserving~~ ^{deserving} -- equally at least, if not more, deserving than I was. So I didn't feel at all badly. ^{also} I didn't think I had a real ~~strong~~ chance. ~~If I had had a few weeklings around me, maybe I would have made it. But I didn't.~~

I was also very fortunate in that I was never passed over by ^{selection} ~~a~~ board, ^{or} as far as I know, for a job. And that has given me some satisfaction too. I was also very fortunate in serving through a period of rapid growth of the Marine Corps, both in size, importance and prestige. It progressed from a small, essentially guard and

ceremonial ~~services~~^{force} with small knowledge of the employment of ~~a~~ well rounded or sizeable forces in battle, to^{the} modern, self sufficient, army that it is today. It's not only an army, it's an élite army, which has the full confidence and admiration of the American people as a whole.

It was not only interesting, but I was ~~glad~~^{proud} to be, ~~a part of~~^{sometimes helpful} that growth, and that's why I said my career has been quite successful, and I look back on it with a great deal of satisfaction.

I am only sorry that it's necessary to retire people so young. Sixty-two years of age, is often when a person is really just coming into his real maturity. I am sure that most people 62 years of age have better judgment than they ever had before in their lives.

I suppose that could be quickly disputed, but when we look at the people that are governing the country today and undertaking very important missions, such as ~~Ambassador Harriman is doing right now~~^{that of AVERILL} in Paris, I don't think that people just because they begin to get in their 60s should be ~~sent~~^{chucked} overboard. Of course it requires a little physical stamina to be a general officer in campaign. But then it requires the same physical stamina to live in a country where a campaign is going on, or to be in the Diplomatic Corps in a country where bombs are dropping and ~~and~~ the embassy is getting shot ~~at~~^{up}. So I wish the machinery could be revised to at least allow healthy people in their 60s to stay on a little longer. Maybe as extra wheels -- step out of the regular line of promotion, allow the young people to come ~~in~~^{up} don't hold down a vacancy after a certain age. ~~But to go into special advisory capacities would help, I am sure.~~
I always felt when I retired that I was full of knowledge that I am

sure the Marine Corps could use, and yet no chance. That's not a *desperate* complaint. ~~It's just an old man talking,~~ I suppose. *the Corps is doing fairly well under the present system.*
(Pause)

Rx Thank you very much for this interview. If you have any further questions I'll be very glad to discuss them, as long as you've got any tape left.

Q: We've got lots of tape, General. I don't have questions, unfortunately. I want to thank you on behalf of the Historical Branch for your time, sir.

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