

ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

General Raymond G. Davis
U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)



Mr. Benis M. Frank, Interviewer

HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION

Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps

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FOREWORD

This typescript, the transcribed memoir of General Raymond G. Davis, USMC (Retired) results from a tape-recorded interview conducted with him at his home in McDonough, Georgia on 2-3 February 1977, and three Vietnam interviews, for the Marine Corps Oral History Program. The Vietnam interviews were conducted at Dong Ha, Vietnam on 1 January and 7 April 1969, and at Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on 15 April 1969. As one facet of the Marine Corps historical collection effort, this program obtains, by means of tape-recorded interviews, primary source material to augment documentary evidence.

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

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

Copies of this memoir are deposited in the Marine Corps Oral History Collection, History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C. and Breckinridge Library, Marine Corps Development and Education Command, Quantico, Virginia.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "E. H. Simmons", is positioned above the printed name.

E. H. SIMMONS

Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums

Signed:
19 April 1978

GENERAL RAYMOND G. DAVIS, USMC (RETIRED)

General Raymond G. Davis, who earned the Medal of Honor in Korea in 1950, retired from active duty March 31, 1972, after more than 33 years on active duty. His last assignment was as Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps from March 12, 1971 until March 31, 1972.

As a lieutenant colonel in Korea, General Davis earned the Nation's highest decoration for heroism during the 1st Marine Division's historic fight to break out of the Chosin Reservoir area. There, against overwhelming odds, he led his battalion in a terrific four-day battle which saved a rifle company from annihilation and opened a mountain pass for the escape of two trapped Marine regiments. The award was presented him by President Truman in a White House ceremony on November 24, 1952. The accompanying citation reads:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as Commanding Officer of the First Battalion, Seventh Marines, First Marine Division (Reinforced), in action against enemy aggressor forces in Korea from 1 through 4 December 1950.

"Although keenly aware that the operation involved breaking through a surrounding enemy and advancing eight miles along primitive icy trails in the bitter cold with every passage disputed by a savage and determined foe, Lieutenant Colonel Davis boldly led his battalion into the attack in a daring attempt to relieve a beleaguered rifle company and to seize, hold and defend a vital mountain pass controlling the only route available for two Marine regiments in danger of being cut off by numerically superior hostile forces during their redeployment to the port of Hungnam.

"When the battalion immediately encountered strong opposition from entrenched enemy forces commanding high ground in the path of the advance, he promptly spearheaded his unit in a fierce attack up the steep, ice-covered slopes in the face of withering fire, and, personally leading the assault groups in a hand-to-hand encounter, drove the hostile troops from their positions, rested his men and reconnoitered the area under enemy fire to determine the best route for continuing the mission.

"Always in the thick of the fighting, Lieutenant Colonel Davis led his battalion over three successive ridges in the deep snow in continuous attacks against the enemy and, constantly inspiring and encouraging his men throughout the night, brought

his unit to a point within 1500 yards of the surrounded rifle company by daybreak. Although knocked to the ground when a shell fragment struck his helmet and two bullets pierced his clothing, he arose and fought his way forward at the head of his men until he reached the isolated Marines.

"On the following morning, he bravely led his battalion in securing the vital mountain pass from a strongly entrenched and numerically superior hostile force, carrying all his wounded with him, including 22 litter cases and numerous ambulatory patients. Despite repeated savage and heavy assaults by the enemy, he stubbornly held the vital terrain until the two regiments of the division had deployed through the pass and, on the morning of 4 December, led his battalion into Hagaru-ri intact.

"By his superb leadership, outstanding courage and brilliant tactical ability, Lieutenant Colonel Davis was directly instrumental in saving the beleaguered rifle company from complete annihilation and enabled the two Marine regiments to escape possible destruction. His valiant devotion to duty and unyielding fighting spirit in the face of almost insurmountable odds enhance and sustain the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

Raymond Gilbert Davis was born on January 13, 1915, in Fitzgerald, Georgia, and graduated in 1933 from Atlanta Technical High School, Atlanta, Georgia. He then entered the Georgia School of Technology, graduating in 1938 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering. While in college he was a member of the Reserve Officers Training Corps unit. After graduation, he resigned his commission in the U.S. Army Infantry Reserve to accept appointment as a Marine second lieutenant on June 27, 1938.

In May 1939, Lieutenant Davis completed the Marine Officers' Basic School at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, and began a year of service with the Marine Detachment on board the USS Portland in the Pacific. He returned to shore duty in July 1940 for weapons and artillery instruction at Quantico, Virginia and Aberdeen, Maryland. Completing the training in February 1941, he was assigned to the 1st Antiaircraft Machine Gun Battery of the 1st Marine Division at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He returned to the United States with the unit in April, and the following month was appointed battery executive officer, serving in that capacity at Parris Island, South Carolina and Quantico. He was promoted to first lieutenant in August 1941. That September he moved with the battery to the Marine Barracks, New River (later Camp Lejeune),

North Carolina. Upon his promotion to captain in February 1942, he was named battery commander.

During World War II he participated in the Guadalcanal Tulagi landings, the capture and defense of Guadalcanal, the Eastern New Guinea and Cape Gloucester campaigns, and the Peleliu operation. Beginning in June 1942, he embarked with his unit for the Pacific area, landing at Guadalcanal two months later. After that campaign, he was appointed Executive Officer of the 1st Special Weapons Battalion, 1st Marine Division. In October 1943, Major Davis took over command of the battalion and served in that capacity at New Guinea and Cape Gloucester. In April 1944, while on Cape Gloucester, he was named Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, 1st Marine Division.

Major Davis' action while commanding the 1st Battalion at Peleliu in September 1944 earned him the Navy Cross and the Purple Heart. Although wounded during the first hour of the Peleliu landing, he refused evacuation to remain with his men; and, on one occasion, when heavy Marine casualties and the enemy's point-blank cannon fire had enabled the Japanese to break through, he personally rallied and led his men in fighting to re-establish defense positions. In October 1944, he returned to Pavuvu and was promoted to lieutenant colonel.

Returning to the United States in November 1944, Lieutenant Colonel Davis was assigned to Quantico as Tactical Inspector, Marine Corps Schools. He was named Chief of the Infantry Section, Marine Air-Infantry School, Quantico, in May 1945, and served in that post for two years before returning to the Pacific area in July 1947 to serve with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade on Guam. He was the 1st Brigade's Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3 (Operations and Training), until August 1948, and from then until May 1949 was Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4 (Logistics). Upon his return from Guam in May 1949, he was named Inspector-Instructor of the 9th Marine Corps Reserve Infantry Battalion in Chicago, Illinois. He served there until August 1950 when he embarked for Korea.

In Korea, Lieutenant Colonel Davis commanded the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, from August to December 1950. Besides receiving the Medal of Honor for action during that period, he twice earned the Silver Star Medal by exposing himself to heavy enemy fire while leading and encouraging his men in the face of strong enemy opposition. He also received the Legion of Merit with Combat "V" for exceptionally meritorious conduct and professional skill in welding the 1st Battalion into a highly-effective combat team.

Later, as Executive Officer of the 7th Marines, from December 1950 to June 1951, Lieutenant Colonel Davis earned the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V" for his part in rebuilding the regiment after the Chosin Reservoir campaign. He returned from Korea in June 1951.

Ordered to Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., Lieutenant Colonel Davis served in the Operations Subsection, G-3, Division of Plans and Policies, until February 1952, when he took charge of the subsection. In April 1953, he became Head of the Operations and Training Branch, G-3 Division. While serving in this capacity, he was promoted to colonel in October 1953.

The following July Colonel Davis attended the Special Weapons Employment Course, Fleet Training Center, Norfolk, Virginia, under instruction. In September 1954 he entered the Senior Course, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico. Upon completing the course in June 1955, he served consecutively as Assistant Director and, later, Director, of the Senior School. In October 1957 he was again transferred to Washington, D.C., and served there as Assistant G-2, Headquarters Marine Corps, until August 1959. The following June he completed the course at the National War College in Washington. Assigned next to Headquarters, United States European Command, in Paris, France, he served from July 1960 through June 1963 as Chief, Analysis Branch, J-2, Staff of the Commander in Chief, Europe. On July 1, 1963, he was promoted to brigadier general while en route to the United States.

General Davis' next assignment was in the Far East where he served as Assistant Division Commander, 3d Marine Division, FMF, on Okinawa, from October 1963 to November 1964. During this period he also performed additional duty as Commanding General, SEATO Expeditionary Brigade, EXLIGTAS, in the Philippines, during June 1964; and as Commanding General, 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, in China Sea Contingency Operations, from August 2 to October 16, 1964.

In December 1964 he was assigned to Headquarters Marine Corps. He served as Assistant Director of Personnel until March 1965, then served as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, until March 1968. For his service in the latter capacity, he was awarded a second Legion of Merit. He was promoted to major general in November 1966.

Ordered to the Republic of Vietnam, General Davis served briefly as Deputy Commanding General, Provisional Corps, then became Commanding General, 3d Marine Division. For his service in the latter capacity from May 22, 1968 until April 14, 1969, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, and three personal decorations by the Vietnamese Government.

Upon his return to the United States in May 1969, he was assigned duty as Deputy for Education with additional duty as Director, Education Center, Marine Corps Development and Education Command, Quantico, Virginia. After his promotion to lieutenant general, July 1, 1970, he was reassigned duty as Commanding General, Marine Corps Development and Education Command.

On February 23, 1971, President Nixon nominated General Davis for appointment to the grade of general and assignment to the position of Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. His nomination was confirmed by the Senate and he received his fourth star on assuming those duties, March 12, 1971.

For his service as Deputy for Education and subsequently as Commanding General, Marine Corps Development and Education Command, Quantico, Virginia, during the period May 1969 to March 1971, and as Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps from March 1971 to March 1972, he was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of a second Distinguished Service Medal.

A complete list of his medals and decorations include: the Medal of Honor; the Navy Cross; the Distinguished Service Medal with Gold Star in lieu of a second award; the Silver Star Medal with Gold Star in lieu of a second award; the Legion of Merit with Combat "V" and Gold Star in lieu of a second award; the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V"; the Purple Heart; the Presidential Unit Citation with four bronze stars indicative of second through fifth awards; the Navy Unit Commendation; the American Defense Service Medal with Fleet clasp; the American Campaign Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with one silver star in lieu of five bronze stars; the World War II Victory Medal; the National Defense Service Medal with one bronze star; the Korean Service Medal with four bronze stars; the Vietnam Service Medal with three bronze stars; the National Order of Vietnam, 4th Class; the National Order of Vietnam, 5th Class; the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with three Palms; two Korean Presidential Unit Citations; the United Nations Service Medal; and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.



In the South Pacific, November 1943. Maj Davis is seated. Standing l. to r.: Maj John P. Leonard, Jr., LCdr Henry C. Hunley, and Capt C. H. Koller



The 9th Infantry Battalion, USMCR, at summer training, Little Creek, Va., July 1949. L. to r.: LtCol John M. Bathum, LtCol Davis, Maj Lionel Harding, Capt Joseph Cross



Koto-ri, Korea, 15Nov50. Ceremony for Bronze Star Medal presentation at 7th Marines CP. Col Homer L. Litzenberg, Jr., Lt C. T. Balzar reading citation, LtCol Davis at far right



Yanggu, Korea, 1951. LtGen Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr.,
CG, FMFPac, is briefed by MajGen Gerald C. Thomas, CG,
1st Marine Division as LtCol Davis looks on



LtCol Davis watches as his Executive Officer, LtCol Webb D. Sawyer is promoted to that rank by Col Litzenberg



President Harry Truman decorates LtCol Davis with Medal of Honor as Col Davis' son looks elsewhere

congratulates Col Davis on his promotion at HQMC



LtGen Thomas, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps,
congratulates Col Davis on his promotion at HQMC

RAYMOND GILBERT DAVIS WAS BORN JAN. 13, 1915, IN FITZGERALD, GA. GRADUATING FROM GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY IN 1938, HE RESIGNED ARMY ROTC COMMISSION TO ACCEPT APPOINTMENT AS A MARINE CORPS SECOND LIEUTENANT JUNE 27, 1938.



IN WORLD WAR II, HE COMMANDED THE 1ST ANTI-AIRCRAFT BTRY. AND LATER, THE 1ST SPECIAL WEAPONS BN, 1ST MAR DIV, IN THE GUADALCANAL, NEW GUINEA, CAPE GLOUCESTER AND PELELIU CAMPAIGNS. AT PELELIU, THE GENERAL, ALTHOUGH WOUNDED, WON THE NAVY CROSS FOR RALLYING HIS MEN AND RE-ESTABLISHING DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AFTER AN ENEMY BREAKTHROUGH.

GEN. DAVIS WENT TO KOREA AS COMMANDER OF THE 1ST BN, 7TH MARINES AND WON THE MEDAL OF HONOR IN THE HISTORIC BREAKOUT FROM THE CHO-SIN RESERVOIR AREA IN DECEMBER 1950. HE LED THE BATTALION IN A SAVAGE FOUR-DAY BATTLE, SAVING A RIFLE COMPANY FROM ANNIHILATION AND OPENING A MOUNTAIN PASS FOR THE ESCAPE OF TWO TRAPPED MARINE REGIMENTS.



HIS CITATION READ, IN PART, "HE BRAVELY LED HIS BATTALION IN SECURING THE VITAL PASS FROM A STRONGLY ENTRENCHED AND NUMERICALLY SUPERIOR HOSTILE FORCE, CARRYING ALL HIS WOUNDED WITH HIM, INCLUDING 22 LITTER CASES AND NUMEROUS AMBULATORY PATIENTS. DESPITE REPEATED SAVAGE AND HEAVY ASSAULTS BY THE ENEMY, HE STUBBORNLY HELD THE VITAL TERRAIN UNTIL THE TWO REGIMENTS OF THE DIVISION HAD DEPLOYED THROUGH THE PASS, AND ON THE MORNING OF DECEMBER 4, LED HIS BATTALION INTO HAGARU-RI INTACT."



THE GENERAL ALSO EARNED TWO SILVER STARS, BRONZE STAR AND LEGION OF MERIT DURING KOREA.

OTHER ASSIGNMENTS HAVE INCLUDED DIRECTOR, SENIOR SCHOOL, QUANTICO; STAFF, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, EUROPE; ASSISTANT COMMANDER, 3d MAR DIV; COMMANDING GENERAL, 9TH MARINE EXPEDITIONARY BRIGADE, VIETNAM, AND SEVERAL TOURS AT HEADQUARTERS. HE IS A GRADUATE OF THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE.

MRS. DAVIS IS THE FORMER WILLA HEAFNER OF LINCOLN-TON, N.C. THEY HAVE THREE CHILDREN, RAYMOND G. JR., GORDON M. AND WILLA KAYE.

THE GENERAL ENJOYS HUNTING, FISHING, BOWLING AND GOLF; WORKS WITH BOY SCOUTS AND YOUTH BASEBALL PROGRAMS AND IS A STUDENT OF U.S. MILITARY HISTORY. HE VISITS SITES OF HISTORICAL INTERESTS AND TOOK ON THE TASK OF TRACING THE MOVEMENTS OF HIS WIFE'S GRANDFATHER, A CONFEDERATE SOLDIER, FROM HIS HOME IN NORTH CAROLINA TO GETTYSBURG AND BACK.



BRIG. GEN. *

RAYMOND G. DAVIS, USMC
ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, G-1.

* SELECTED FOR MAJ. GEN.

Navy Times

A Navy Times cartoon portraying Gen Davis' career



Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen Wallace M. Greene, Jr. (center) is briefed at 3d MarDiv headquarters on Okinawa. MajGen James M. Masters, Sr. (2d from left) and BGen Davis (r.) look on

Marine 1



Secretary of the Navy Paul H. Nitze shakes hands with BGen Davis, CG, 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, as MajGen William R. Collins look on



1 Holders of the Medal of Honor at HQMC, 8 August 1967, gather to wish retiring Col Reginald R. Myers good luck. L. to r.: BGen Louis H. Wilson, MajGen Davis, Col Myers, Col William E. Barber, Maj Archie Van Winkle



MajGen and Mrs. Davis pin second lieutenant's bars
on their son, Miles, at Quantico, November 1967



MajGen Davis awards his son Miles a Purple Heart at the 3d Marine Division command post in Vietnam, 1969



First Lieutenant Miles Davis is promoted to that rank by his father and Col Robert H. Barrow, CO, 9th Marines in Vietnam, 1969



Gen Davis has the four stars of the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps pinned on by Gen Leonard F. Chapman, Jr., Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Mrs. Davis

Gen Edwin F. Simmons, Deputy Commandant



Gen Davis poses with MajGen Alan J. Armstrong, CG, 3d MAB
and BGen Edwin H. Simmons, Deputy Commander in Vietnam



Gen Davis receives honors at his retirement ceremonies in the Sousa Band Hall, Marine Barracks, 8th and I, with Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen Robert E. Cushman, Jr. on 30 March 1972

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BMF

MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: General Raymond G. Davis, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Mr. Benis M. Frank, Head, Oral History Section

Date and place of Interview: 2 February 1977, McDonough, Georgia

Tape 1, Side 1

Q: And I thought that we'd sort of do this topsy-turvy, in a sense, that we'd get to the Vietnam-related questions first, and then go to the career in depth, and then there will also be some questions at that point relating to your Vietnam period again.

The first questions pertain to the 1964 period when you were the ADC of the 3d Marine Division on Okinawa and also the Commanding General of the 9th MEB, and the first question is: what contingency organizations existed for expeditionary operations prior to the Gulf of Tonkin crisis?

Davis: Well, of course we had organizations that were responsive to two channels of command. One was the administrative channel of FMFPac, and that would be the Marine Corps-type organization, and the other was Navy task-forcing type organization through Seventh Fleet, and in both these, responsive to JCS and CinCPac originated directives, there were a whole series of OpPlans and contingency plans for Southeast Asia. For these, there were division-level plans, MEF-level plans, and in most of them there were provisions for brigade-level plans, and responsive to these there were organized on paper at all

times things like the 9th MEB. In my time there with Jim Masters, there was an effort at all times to upgrade its readiness. We were in a little bit of competition with the airborne brigade there, I think it was the 173d, if I remember, as they had contingency plans. They had holds on the airlift capability available. We also had plans which involved some of the same airlift as well as the Navy lift, and there was an effort on our part to ensure that we were the most responsive force in the Pacific theater. We would go through any number of drills, mount-out drills, moving to the airport with a very carefully controlled timing and umpire procedure, so that as time went on, we got very, very responsive to the mount-out situation.

Q: At that time, did it look to you that Vietnam was going to be the, that the Marines and the U.S. forces were going to go to Vietnam.

Davis: It looked like the most probable. As a matter of fact, I made a trip with one of the Marine 130s over to Thailand, and disturbed the whole countryside, because we flew five hours at treetop level exploring roads and passes and everything on that side of Cambodia--we couldn't go into Cambodia--but that side of the area as part of an overview of that whole thing. We were in and out of Vietnam a number of times.

Q: You did get to go to Vietnam.

Davis: Yes, I was in Danang before the flare-up twice. One time, I guess it was the time we deployed the 9th MEB, I flew directly to Danang and went ashore there uninvited because at the time there was a great fright. They thought that things were moving in on them and had no objection to my being there because I had a brigade afloat--one battalion already afloat and others getting ready to come--which offered really the only force in being that could help them out. So, it wasn't until the thing settled down that General Westmoreland got a little concerned about having an uninvited brigade headquarters up at Danang, and I was invited to get back on the ships.

You see, I couldn't go back on the ships/^{immediately}because "Squidge" Lee, who was the Navy counterpart, was off ^{or} Luzon/somewhere. He couldn't get there for some days, whereas I had a capability, if need be, of flying some of my force down from Okinawa. To prepare for this, I went directly into Danang, and then as the ships ^{back} came over the horizon, we were able to get/together and get afloat.

Q: When was this time when Westmoreland got upset?

Davis: 1964, and the precise timing escapes me, but it was in '64, it was at the time that there was some kind of an onfall from the north and real concern about it, and it was the time of the Secretary of the Navy's visit out there...

Q: Nitze.

Davis: ...I think that it says right on the picture there.

Q: I think that it was September or October '64, wasn't it?

Davis: Well anyway, that was the time when the 9th MEB went afloat and stayed afloat. I was CG until my relief, when it came time for me to come back to the States.

Q: "Rip" Collins relieved you, did he not?

Davis: Collins was the division commander. John Coursey relieved me. He was the Assistant Wing Commander. He came down to take the MEB when I left to come back to the States.

Q: Were you, as the MEB commander and the Assistant Division Commander on Okinawa, also, kept, made aware of what was going on in Vietnam at this time.

Davis: Oh yes.

Q: You were an information addressee on all traffic.

Davis: We had daily briefings. As a matter of fact, we had some representation over there. We were sending some NCOs over there for training all the time.

Q: I was going to ask you about the on-the-job training program. Weren't officers going also?

Davis: Yes. NCOs and officers^{were} over there. We were also making visits, and, of course, rotating the local aviation unit in and out of Shu-Fly. So it was right next

door. It was a very important part of our whole effort, to be ready to go, and we had a whole series of landing plans.

One direct result of my flying over there in '64 was--the few days I was ashore there with my staff--was to work out a precise landing^{plan}--check out landing beaches, precise plans for putting troops ashore either out on the strand or inside the ^{harbor} / there at Danang. In fact, when they finally went ashore in '65, they went over the exact same beaches that we staked out in '64.

Q: There was no question but that the Marines would land at Danang?

Davis: That was always thought to be the plan, although we had other sites in the plan as possibilities.

Q: Was there any other time besides the actual landing in '65 and the time you were alerted in '64 that it looked as though Marines would be committed.

Davis: Not to my knowledge. There was no other really clear indication that we would be committed.

Q: What was your lead time? What was your warning time?

Davis: Well, on this one, they were just kind of overnight. We had gone through drills (just the typical exercise-type drills) where we had actually flown in all the aircraft from around the Pacific--Air Force, primarily--as they put into Okinawa. We had gone down and loaded them and even made some flights out of there. There is always this kind of preparedness

and readiness, and you didn't really need much response time.

The day before this thing flared up, we had drilled the MEB headquarters in preparation for Mr. Nitze's visit, and so we were all set to go.

Q: What was the origin of the 9th MEB?

Davis: By origin, I don't know...

Q: What did it grow out of, what was its antecedent? What was the authorization for the formation and was it a follow-up...

Davis: It was just one of the FMFPac contingency organizations. I don't know what its predecessors were. It was just in the FMFPac contingency package forever as far as I know.

Q: I assume that the Gulf of Tonkin affair did alter Marine contingency plans in the Western Pacific. The question here is how and to what extent?

Davis: Primarily in upgrading, I think, just increase the readiness and other things. You see, in those kind of situations where you've been for years in a full-time readiness and training status, you have continuous development of plans to go anywhere and everywhere.

Q: The staff was continually working on changes?

Davis: Yes.

Q: Now, JTF-116 was still in effect, was it not?

Davis: Yes, that rings a bell.

Q: That was that group that went over to Thailand.

Davis: I don't remember the precise tie-in that we had at that time with that group, CinCPac and the command in Vietnam, but as I recall the period, it was one of continuous review and update, meetings, conferences, the whole thing. A continuing effort to ensure that our force was the most ready force possible, and certainly the most ready force out there. When the bell rang, everybody knew who was going, because we were the ones that were ready for it.

Q: Well, now, you left the 9th MEB just about the time it was ready to go. You left the...

Davis: The end of October in '64. We had been afloat about 90 days.

Q: That status and posture of the forces at that time were good?

Davis: Yes.

Q: Contingency plans and planning was continuing.

Davis: Yes.

Q: Now in June you had commanded a SEATO exercise, EXLIGTAS, which stood for what? Exercise something or other.

Davis: Yes, LIGTAS, I don't recall / where that came from. Something to do with the Philippines. You see, we had participation by the Marines, the U.S. Army (Airborne), the Philippine contingents, the Australian contingents, the British Navy.

Q: That exercise was conducted in the Philippines?

Davis: Yes, we landed at Mindoro, the coast of the Philippines, the same landing area that John Condon had commanded some years before.

Q: Had you know what you were going to do when you were detached from the division and the MEB? Had you received advance word that you were going to get the G-1 job?

Davis: I don't recall. I heard about that I
guess when General Greene was out there. ^{He was there} very frequently
and in the process, some time or another, I certainly had been
told where I was going from there. I was primarily ADC and
these brigades were just opportunities to get out and work on
exercises.

Q: What were your functions within the 3d Division as the ADC?
You were General Masters' Assistant Division Commander.

Davis: Yes, and then General Collins', who relieved General Masters. Pretty much the normal assignments for an ADC. Both of them were away quite a bit and I was tending store back home in their absence. General Collins happened to be away over the Marine Corps Birthday, so I did all 13 or 14 birthday balls and so forth around the island, and entertained the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force at those. And I say that just as an example of how the thing got scheduled and how, at times, I would have to assume the full load.

At other times, insofar as both of them were concerned, my primary concerns were in the readiness aspect. I was pretty much charged by both of those division commanders

to
 /ensure that there was not a single flaky area in our readi-
 ness, and, of course, both division commanders were^{also}/task
 force commanders, they had the MEB, the wing-division task
 force, and they had a planning headquarters, so they spent
 a lot of time away.

Q: The 3d Division had experienced quite a few problems,
 primarily in logistics, in the field of logistics, before
 this time--the big GAO report, when there was considerable
 fall-out. Had this been pretty well settled by the time that
 you had gotten out there.

Davis: Yes, it was in the process. We were catching all the
 follow-up inspections, you know. General Krulak was out there
 and the Washington group, but that had all kind of sorted itself
 out before I had arrived. I just got there in time to see
 the effects of it and follow-up inspections, and all that
 which...

Q: Who did you relieve?

Davis: The younger Masters, Bud Masters.

Q: That's right. He had worked for his brother.

Davis: Yes, that was quite an interesting time. Both fine
 generals, I thought.

Q: When you got back to Headquarters and you were assigned
 as Assistant Director of Personnel and Assistant Chief of Staff
 G-1, had you ever done much of this personnel business before?

Davis: No, not in that light. Somehow my career has been involved in, well, fortunate for me, much time in the education business, I've been in and out of Quantico, and then when I did go overseas, initially in a special weapons outfit, but finally I settled into the infantry business, but when I went to the brigade on Guam, '44-'45, I was the G-3 initially, with General Craig before Lew Walt arrived, and when Lew Walt arrived I went down to be the G-4. Then I was...

Q: The brigade was '47-'49.

Davis: I thought that it was before that.

Q: No. You were with the 1st Marine Division until '44 and then back to Quantico.

Davis: Yes, '47, was that when it was?

Q: Yes sir.

Davis: Yes, '46-'47. By that time I was the G-3 and G-4, and when I went to Washington--those dates escape me--in '59 or so, I was with General Masters in G-2, and I said jokingly to some of the bosses in Washington when I came back and was told I was going to be G-1, "Well, you are just trying to find something I can do," I said, "because you had me up here in the G-2, and the G-3, and I've been a G-4; I've never been a G-1!" But I really enjoyed that.

Q: Your primary concern was supporting the Marine Corps effort in Vietnam, was it not?

Davis: Not initially.

Our commitment / Vietnam really didn't happen until I
got back and was in the G-1's saddle for a while.

Q: I think that we'll skip that and go on to your second tour out there, which was '68-'69 when you were Deputy Commander of the Provisional Corps and also CG of the 3d MarDiv. In your capacity as Deputy Commanding General of the Provisional Corps, what was your relationship with General Rosson?

Davis: Well, let me say right off, I went to the National War College with Bill Rosson and we were very close friends from then and/having been/him a couple of other times.

He was, in my view, the ideal type of commander who was really out with the troops, getting the most out of his forces all the time, day and night. And I was there a relatively short time, but, again, I spent much of that initial time just with him. He gave me a helicopter to follow him around, I guess for the better part of a month, just getting oriented and getting attuned to the entire situation so I could, I guess, assume command if anything happened to him.

And then he started orienting me more towards something similar to what I had done in the 3d Division at/ that is, in terms of not/the readiness of forces, but the effectiveness of forces. That became/effort that I was just getting involved in when I got word that I was going up to the 3d Division. You know, it was kind of a musical chairs

where Van Ryzin coming back to be Chief
of Staff and Tompkins going down to be the deputy at III MAF.

Q: Tompkins came out as an emergency measure when Hochmuth died. So he hadn't been out there...

Davis: when
...too long / he was moved down to be the deputy
at Danang when Van Ryzin left. That's when I was sent
up to Dong Ha.

Q: The point that you had gone to the National War College
with General Rosson...other people I have interviewed^{and}/have
spoken with said that one of the most important things, reasons
for Marine assignments to the National War College is to
develop relationships with senior officers of the other
services, and it has very often worked out. Do you suppose
that your assignment as deputy to ProvCorps was because of
your having known Rosson before?

Davis: That would certainly have been a contribution, because,
you know, when your name comes up for such an assignment, it's
checked out with people. I'm sure that when Rosson was told
that I might become available, he would have agreed to it.
As a matter of fact, he told me that when he heard my name,
he went to bat to get me out there. Yes, that's a great
advantage of the National War College. Not only Army, Navy,
Air Force, but State Department, CIA, some Commerce Department
people--you just meet so many people when you're there./close
together for the better part of a year, arguing with one another,
discussing things, making trips around to the various parts

of the world, it's a very fine relationship, I thought, and that is a big gain out of the time spent in the National War College.

Q: Could you please give an assessment of the overall Army-Marine Corps relationship following establishment of MACV(Fwd) under General Abrams and also the establishment of ProvCorps?

Davis: Well, when I arrived, it was in transition. MACV was going back south and leaving ProvCorps up there, which was subsequently designation XXIV Corps. I don't know of any problems. It was obvious that there had been some negotiation going on with III MAF at Danang, which eventually became the boss headquarters over XXIV Corps, but there was no way of short-circuiting the direct channel between Saigon and XXIV Corps, because they had to do so many things from Saigon in support of the Army units up there. This was the Army's support channel. In the same way, there was a lot of direct channel dealing between the 3d Division and Danang for Marine purposes, even though I was under the OpCon of XXIV Corps when I went down to the division.

Right now I can't pinpoint any serious problems.

Q: Well, there was considerable talk and criticism when MACV(Fwd) was established. It appeared to many Marines that this was a vote of no confidence on the part of Westmoreland vis a vis III MAF.

Davis: I could see the Army's problem, too. They were putting their best and most important forces up there when they took

the air cavalry and the airborne divisions and other divisions up there. This was the best that the Army had, and they were in an experimental posture, too. They had previously fully committed all of these kinds of forces to combat, so I can see how the Army'd be ticklish about turning them over.

Q: General Chaisson also said at one point when we were interviewing him that, and he wouldn't be more explicit, during the Khe Sanh period and the building of the barrier along the demilitarized zone, Westmoreland didn't have confidence or had lost confidence in some of the Marines up there. He didn't mention whom they were, and wasn't more specific. It's been hinted that there was a real logistics foul-up, but for some reason Westmoreland didn't have full confidence in the commanders up there. Did you have any knowledge or feeling about this?

Davis: I saw some of it in Khe Sanh. In defense of the Marines, the situation was changed from the Korean War or World War II. We are somewhat a victim of our circumstances and our capabilities.

In World War II it was kind of a shoulder to situation. we had shoulder / In Korea/a little more mobility but still

confined by our ability to move over the ground, walking or in jeeps, and so forth. Here comes (even though we invented the helicopter concept) here comes a highly mobile force with everybody in a helicopter--the Assistant G-3 had his own helicopter in this Army. There were just unbelievable

numbers of helicopters, and with these, you can, as we found when we had enough helicopters, you can do the entire thing differently. I presume that the Army was looking at what the Marines were doing when they were pretty much on foot, and didn't have a helicopter lift. The CH-46A, you know, ^{had} the tail come off of a few of them, and we had to stand them down, rebuild them. They wouldn't lift anything/ I think that the Marines in the division when I arrived there were in a different

attitude and posture, more defensive. They were defensive...and some of this stemmed from the McNamara Line concept where it was ^{prescribed} / that you put a battalion in here and a battalion in here and a battalion in there. If the higher echelons even encouraged you to do it that way, it becomes easy.

So we got our forces tied up into small knots in a defensive posture.

Possibly was Army looking at this while realizing their own capabilities to move forces by helicopter with a different concept. This probably led to criticism of how Marines were doing it. There was never any criticism of the way we did it once we got the helicopters and got going.

Q: Nothing about the commanders or the personalities or anything like that?

Davis: No. In the case of Bill Rosson, he thought very highly of Tommy Tompkins, who was under his command. He lamented this posture that we were in, however,

and I had to agree with him that when we could, we needed to get out of that defensive posture. It was such a defensive posture that on one of my visits up there one time with Rosson we had...there had been a heavy action the night before--the troop units considering as their primary mission the breaking off the contact with the enemy and getting back into the battalion position before dark.

That's the way they thought the thing was designed.

As a result, we had some extra casualties in breaking off before dark instead of whipping the enemy...you always have less casualties if you whip him and stand on the battleground when it's over. ^{Then} you've got all of his wounded and all your own and your dead.

Q: These were Marines?

Davis: Yes.

Q: What about the III MAF-MACV relationship?

Davis: I was not really attuned to that, I don't know. I just ^{been} wouldn't have/privy, anyway, to anything Westmoreland or Abrams had to say about their relations with III MAF.

Q: At the time that you took command of the 3d Division, what was the situation, what conditions prevailed which permitted you to mount more mobile operations than your predecessors? Your desire to do so?

Davis: Fortunately for me, I had served with Rosson for the better part of two months--out with him every day, directly involved and actually participating

the
 in these high-mobility operations which / air-cavalry
 conducting.
 division was / You know, just floods of heli-
 copters, and I had reviewed their writings and I had my
 aide write up an example of one of these applied to the
 Marines, because they had lifted a couple of Marine battalions
 at that time. It was interesting to me that the Marines
 were beginning to participate in this kind of a high-mobility
 helicopter operation, which they really hadn't done before.
 We had our operations usually tied to selecting an
 ideal place for a helicopter to sit down as opposed to sitting
 down where you can defeat the enemy. The helicopter landing
 zone became an overpowering requirement too often.

while
 I saw what was happening up in the division and/partici-
 pating with Rosson-Westmoreland conversations I came to feel that
 it was not
 /really necessary to have so much of the force tied down to
 fixed positions.

We had something like two dozen battalions up there
 all tied down (with little exception) to these fixed
 positions, and the situation didn't demand it. So, when the Army
 moved into Pegasus to relieve the Khe Sanh operation
 they applied forces directly responsive
 to the enemy's dispositions and forgot about real estate--
 forgetting about bases, going after the enemy in key areas--
 this punished the enemy most. Pegasus demonstrated the
 decisiveness of high mobility operations. fixed
 The way to get it done was to get out of those/positions
 and get mobility to go and destroy the enemy on our terms--
 not sit there and absorb the shot and shell and frequent pene-
 trations that he was able to / mount.
 So all this led me, as soon
 as I heard that I was going, it led me to do something I had

never done before or since, and that is to move in prepared in the first hours to completely turn the / ^{command} upside down.

by
They were committed/battalion in fixed positions in such a way that they had very little mobility.

The relief of CGs took place at 11 o'clock. At 1 o'clock I assembled the staff and commanders; before dark, battalion positions had become company positions. It happened just that fast.

Q: But you knew exactly just what you were going to do?

Davis: Yes. I had an opportunity to observe it, being a part of it. I had enough time to stake out exactly the way it should be, and move in there running.

Q: Had the 3d Division become too defensive minded?

Davis: That was their whole posture, one of defensive mindedness. The whole McNamara Line idea was one of positioning forces and I don't know the total background of the mentality of the people that brought this on.

Even when the Army was moving its brigades around Khe Sanh, there was still concern about the role the Marines were playing and a reluctance of the Marines to participate. They seemed convinced that they couldn't break out of

there, take this hill, and run over here and take that hill as they were invited to do. They did and it worked, but there was a reluctance.

I was in on the talk about it up at Khe Sanh

visualize the Army concept.
and they could not / You know, having been there all this
period and absorbing all this shot and shell and being whacked
every time they stuck their head out, it was pretty hard
to convince people that all they had to do/^{was}to jump out and
get on that hill.

Q: Was this a Marine attitude primarily?

Davis: Yes, in the main all that were at Khe Sanh were
Marines.

Q: Now, this is interesting because as I understand it and
as General Chaisson said, one of the great criticisms, if
MACV had any, was the fact that Marines did not know how to
dig in a good defense, that all they knew how to do was to
get up and attack, that they were incapable of putting in a
good defense, digging down deep enough and that sort of thing.
That seems a contrast to what you are saying now, this other
attitude.

Davis: If there was any of that around, I was not aware of
it. Certainly I was aware of them being dug in at Khe Sanh,
they were certainly dug in down deep in the ground and whether
there was criticism of that or not, I don't know. I recognize
some of the criticism of the blood and guts seizure of defend-
ed positions sometimes that we were criticized for. I don't
know the circumstances of why it was done and who did it or
where it was done, but I've heard it stated that there were
times when instead of assaulting the hill, we
should have done it another way. We certainly attempted
to do that. At times when there was a defended pinnacle

that we were going to take, I called a halt to the battalion commander. We sat down and talked the thing over, then for two days we sent small scouting parties up to get these defenses located, put air and artillery on them to grind them up. We did this for two days until / ^{there} was not much up there to kill Marines. We got the thing done with practically no casualties; whereas if we had gone with a blood and guts attitude ^{just} of/assaulting it, we would have had 25 or 30 people killed. I don't know whence such criticism, ^{and} /I don't recognize it as a genuine general criticism. I was aware of it happening on more than one occasion.

Q: I think that it probably happened earlier, before you got out there, during the height of the Khe Sanh siege.

Davis: And it happened with some Army units, some gung ho young Army captains slaughtered their troops by slamming into defensive works.

Q: Now, when you took over the division and began mounting these more mobile operations, where did you get the additional helicopters to support them?

Davis: Well, I was very fortunate in this that the later model of the CH-46 was arriving in country in large numbers.

Whereas it would pick up a platoon, the old 46 would hardly pick up a squad.

At the same time because of my close relationship with Bill Rosson, I had his promise of support. He'd give me Army helicopters if necessary to make the thing work, but I didn't

have to have any sizable numbers of Army helicopters. We did get some, but I was assured of support. This was a fine thing about my command out there, Rosson (and his relief Stilwell) guaranteed me/when we'd go into these tactical operations ^{that} I never / ^{needed} to look back over my shoulder a single time / ^{and} wonder if I was going to be supported. I/ they were going to give me the helicopters I would need, the communications, whatever I needed including Army units. I could get on the phone/they'd launch an Army brigade up there to help me if necessary. I knew that...I knew that Rosson and Stilwell fully supported/^{me}and would fully support, would never leave me out on a limb. On the other side of the coin, it was their war, too.

Q: What about Marine support? Was it non-existent?

Davis: There was no problem. I am talking about support that was over and above what was available through Marine channels. The Marines had another division down south.

They called on me at times and took forces away from me that I didn't want to give up, but I recognized that they had problems down there. I didn't fully appreciate their deployment ⁱⁿ down there/ the rocket belt...they had an enormous force inside that rocket belt which never made good sense to me from Dong Ha. ^{However,} / I never got down there and really looked at it.

We started out with 24 battalions and got whittled down to about 12 as our operations succeeded.

Most of those were recovered from moving from purely de-

fensive operations with all battalions tied down to high mobility operations where we were out killing enemy all the time. Our force needs went down as we destroyed all the enemy.

Q: What about the establishment of that Provision MAG-39 in the north? Can you give some background to that?

Davis: I discussed this in some other tapes.

Q: Yes, I remember, I guess we can refer to those because both of those Vietnam interviews contain considerable material on this.

Davis: Oh yes. I wanted to make the main point, and I'll make it again. That is, that you can't put a Marine ground commander that far away (even though you can talk to him on the phone and the radio circuits are good) you can't put him that far away and have him rely on ^{support} air/and not have an air commander up there responsive to him; not just somebody who'll approve or disapprove of the planning the night before and the execution during the day, but somebody responsive to the changing needs of the situation as they occur. That was where the establishment of ^{the commander,} MAG (Fwd)/ who didn't have authority to do those things, didn't work. We could only resolve the problem by putting another brigadier up there.

Q: In fact what you had on the 3d Division staff was a pretty high-priced air officer, a brigadier general, which

would indicate then that standard doctrine of having a colonel air officer on the staff didn't work.

Davis: Well, you need both. This brigadier general wasn't an air officer on my staff. He was an air commander who had enough authority delegated him from the wing, where he could execute things, he could order air units to do things. An air officer on the staff couldn't. So, this was an air commander up there as the deputy to the wing commander for air operations in the forward area, and as such, he had authority to order air to do things.

Q: This was unusual, wasn't it?

Davis: It was needed by the situation. It's easy to say that a wing can support two divisions if the two divisions are right there together and everybody's got pretty much the same ^{not} problem. But/when you've got one division up north of the mountains operating a highly flexible high mobility operation which depends on air (see, in the old days, if the airplanes didn't show up, you could walk) for putting troops on little pinnacles where you can't walk to them. You can't supply them, you can't extract them, you can't get your casualties out. You're totally dependent upon air for support to make your operation work, and the lives of your troops are in the hands of the aviators. Under those circumstances, I maintain that it's got to be a responsive air command there on the scene, and when we had that, there was no problem. When we didn't have it, it was a shambles.

Q: What you are saying in effect, then, that if you didn't have a high-powered officer, despite all that has been said about the Marine air-ground...

End, Side 1, Tape 1

Begin, Side 2, Tape 1

Davis: Air can't be responsive to distant situations like this--not from a lack of will or skill, or anything like that. As I've described in some other interviews, the ground commander has been fogged in all day, his forces are committed, he's got troubles in a half a dozen places, and it will soon be dark or the fog is closing in again. He's got two or three hours to do certain things, and he's figured out what he wants to do. But before he can translate that into a message down to the air commander way off somewhere, and the air commander can look at his resources and decide what to do and get's the message back up, the opportunity is gone!

As an example, I would fly out, sit down
elements,
with Bob Barrow who had the deployed/and we would work out
what he could do and what the division
forces could do to support what he wanted to do. With
this worked out, all of a sudden we had
to communicate way off somewhere to see if we can execute
because we can't do it without the helicopters and the air strikes

Q: What that meant in effect, then, is that you had to have a dedicated helicopter force assigned right with the division,

which is what, in effect, I believe happened with the assignment of ProvMAG-39 up north.

Davis: Yes, and that would have worked under normal circumstances, but we were always running into restrictions, normal restrictions, that had to go back to Danang to be overruled. As an example, a limit on the number of hours of operation on the helicopter during the day. Either operate three more more hours or your troops bleed to death, but the helicopter commander doesn't have any authority to violate his wing commander's directive not to fly these helicopters more than these hours.

Same way with weather conditions. The wing commander had restrictions, and they probably stemmed all the way back to / ^{Navy} air channels. There were restrictions on what kind of weather they could do operations in. These had to be overturned. Well, with a commander like ^{Homer Dan} Hill, or other brigadier with wing commander authority, you could get those things sorted out. If he couldn't overrule them, at least you knew, as the situation developed, from first-hand information from the air commander, what he was going to be able to do and what he wouldn't be able to do. ^{Then} / you could translate what he could do into some positive action.

We got into trouble at times, these kind of operations lead to trouble. When we got Barrow's forces emplaced out in Dewey Canyon and the weather closed in for 10 or 11 days, that ^{was} / real trouble! You've got total

reliance on the air to support and supply, and all of a sudden the weather is such that under any kind of normal instructions from an air command would close down all flight operations. Well, you've got to have somebody who's there and has got the authority to make exceptions to those ironclad rules and restrictions.

Q: Of course, about this time--we were talking earlier about it, perhaps--the problems which occurred during this time gave rise to the Youngdale Board and the Armstrong Board to reexamine air-ground relations, which even in World War II and Korea were ^{always} ~~tenuous~~. But it was much more critical, it seems to me, with the requirement for helicopter support. I saw a number of the tape interviews that came through and are in the Oral History Collection, and the debriefings at FMFPac, the air commanders complaining that the ground commanders didn't understand, did not use their helicopter assets correctly and failed or wouldn't understand the problems of the helicopter commanders. Whereas the ground commanders said that it was difficult to work with the air people and that air people were inflexible and unwilling to understand and come to grips with the problems of the ground commander. If this is valid, did this problem more or less come to a point at the time you were out there?

Davis: Well, I think that it came to a head because we couldn't operate, we got ourselves into a posture where we couldn't operate without responsive air. It wasn't just helicopter air, it was reconnaissance air, it was support air. There were times when we didn't want to put our force

down unless the air had done an effective job in preparation, and something could throw this off. Many times

it was all scheduled, it was all initially possible, but when you got out in the morning to do it at 8:30, you were fogged in. One or more of your necessary ingredients--whether it was logistics or the lift itself or the air support--somewhere there was some cause for delay of two hours.

Well, ^{delay} the two hour/ was certain, but we didn't have a flexible amount of air capability to ensure that when the fog did lift, that we could set another time and go. Again, we didn't have a sufficient air ^{kind of} command up there on the scene to respond to this /two-hour changes.

Q: Do you think this situation was much more grievous and much greater a problem in the 3d Division area than in the 1st Division area?

Davis: Oh much more, because in the south air and ground commands were there together, they were sleeping together.

Q: Now, ProvMAG-39, a helicopter group, actually moved up north...

Davis: Right.

Q: ...and was right there with the 3d Division at Dong Ha, and that solved or alleviated the problem.

Davis: That helped, but they were still having a problem

of tactical support for the helicopters and overruling of wing restrictions on helicopter operations, and these kinds of things. In other words, when it was very tenuous, they had certain rules about visibility, certain rules about hours of operation per day. I don't know whether it restricted the pilot or the aircraft. They also had certain rules about the presence of TacAir. Now, as long as everything was going according to plan, it was great. But there were times (just a brief example in Dewey Canyon) during this 11 difficult days when it was almost impossible to support the forces out in the hills. At times down at Camp Evans (the big Army base where they had the logistics and where we put some supplies for our own purposes) that that base would be clear of fog and open for, say, two hours during the day--it was never predictable which two hours. Also the base at Quang Tri (where we prepared another big helicopter support base) might be open a different two hours or three hours. Vandegrift itself would be in and out of the fog. Likewise the forces out in the field were in and out of the fog.

In order to operate we had to post people around and get a reading every few minutes on what it looked like at those places, while maintaining the helicopters air strikes and air drops in a flexible enough posture to respond. In this situation, I found myself out many times in my helicopter double-checking with Barrow on what the situation at that moment demanded in terms of priorities. Barrow had a changing situation--maybe one time he had

casualties to get out, the next time one of his units was short of a certain kind of ammunition or the radio batteries were gone. Immediate

decisions were required when the weather started to break and Barrow's units started reporting, "I've got a hole in the sky right now," and Evans would say, "I've got a hole in the sky right now and predict that it's going to last for a half an hour or so." Somebody had to have the authority to say, "Helicopter, you go there, you pick up this and you take it there," / ^{when} the helicopters ^{had} are sitting back in a place where they/been told not to fly.

This led to some pretty serious problems at times and a claim on the part of the ground units affected that they weren't getting the support they needed.

So, this was/a ^{not} matter of simple planning ahead of time. It required air commanders with authority to overrule the ground rules restrictions.

Q: And guts a little beyond which was normally required.

Davis: I would never use that word against the aviators because they've got all the guts in the world. Maybe the commanders were reluctant to risk their resources but ^{not} the aviators were/reluctant to fly into danger; they did that all of the time.

Q: I don't mean to be pejorative, but, for instance, the hours per flight time of each bird, the safety factors, in a ~~combat~~ situation, were these artificialities or were they really valid? I've heard so much...

Davis: They were directives and they weren't inflexible in that somewhere in the command channel there / ^{was} authority to overrule it, but this wasn't down with the helicopter flight leader that I was talking to. It was somewhere else that this authority had to come from. Any time you take two hours to get that authority, your opportunity is gone. The troops are still without ammunition. That casualty is still up there on the hill, or whatever.

Q: It was much more of a direct situation between you and the helicopters, but what about fixed wing support?

Davis: Well, the same thing to a lesser degree. Whereas, when you assign all these helicopters up there responsive to the division, if you don't provide for the fixed wing support that goes with the operation in like degree, then you've got the problem all over again. In other words, ⁱⁿ an operation that is going to put forces 10 miles down a valley into these critical areas and all keyed to aviation support (there is no way to support them with artillery, for example, it's keyed to aviation support) aviation support has to be committed in such a way that as the situation changes, the aviation support will be there.

In World War II and Korea we had on-station air support. We said we're going to jump off in the morning, we want four Corsairs on station ^{for a certain time} / at a certain time, and they'd be there. Well, you can't do that with jets. They don't have the time on station that we had in the old airplanes. And so we lost that kind of flexibility, because when they're on station up

there, and the situation on the ground is varied, you knew that you could call on the airplanes to do what you needed them to do.

Q: Of course, the Korean situation changed after your time with that Joint Operations Center business, which you're probably aware of, I'm sure.

Davis: Yes. Well, it changed in Vietnam, too, when the single management problem got involved and^{it} got more difficult. The net effect of that was that more Marine air went in support of Army units. I don't disagree with the Army infantry getting supported, but I think the Air Force needs to plan for adequate support for the Army divisions, so that it won't be necessary to use so much of our capability.

Q: I wanted to ask you earlier, when you went out to take over the division and your ProvCorps assignment, you stopped off at FMFPac.

Davis: Oh yes.

Q: General Buse, I guess, had relieved, or was General Krulak still there? Let's see...

Davis: I think that Krulak was still there.

Q: March, he was still out there because he didn't leave until May, I believe. Did he take you aside and say, "Now look

Ray. We've got a bad situation out here. We're working for MACV, but we've got to look out for Marine Corps interests. If you have any problems, let me know."

Davis: I don't recall whether he ^{just that} did/or not. I was aware of most of the problems from Headquarters Marine Corps, because General Greene kept us pretty well informed and I had many sessions with General Greene when these kind of things were talked about. Possibly for that reason that I was so aware of it, I don't remember. If I had been surprised by it when I went through FMFPac and had been told about it, I'd remember.

I got a full briefing on everything that was going on. It's hard for me to think that that kind of thing wouldn't have been mentioned, but I can't remember it specifically.

Q: Given the kind of activist that General Krulak was and having the role that he did have, which wasn't in direct command of Marine troops in a combat situation, I'm sure...

Davis: I'm sure that everything that he knew about it he told me.

Q: As commander of the 3d Division, how were your relations with III MAF?

Davis: We were pretty far away, and actually, III MAF didn't enter into my operations a great deal. I was under OpCon of XXIV Corps and they provided the support. I had some bad times with III MAF at

times trying to protect my force from being pulled out from under me. Because, as you know, when they would generate a big operation down in Danang, they'd just reach out and take some of my forces. I'd never object so much to taking of forces, but in some of the ways they did it. of the idea

I was a proponent/that the best way to get an effective force is to have the units operating together. When I put Bob Barrow out with the 9th Marines, I would never let one of those battalions get away from him unless they were surplus to his needs. / I would take it temporarily/ do something and give it back to him. I didn't believe and don't now believe in this shifting of units around all the time -- it was so bad when I arrived out there that some of the infantry battalions had never been supported by their normal direct support artillery. It was always somebody else's artillery. And the/infantry/regiments never had their own battalions. The Army went into that war with a totally flexible organization, but I saw on application that they never disturbed their brigade organizations. Once they set on a brigade, the forces of that brigade were there. It was a fixed, even though on paper it was more flexible, it was fixed in actual operations.

Our's were fixed in T/Os and totally flexible in application. Well, we could not have done those operations out in those mountains with a mixture of forces. That force got better every day it was together, and these were the sources of arguments I was having with III MAF. They wanted to

move certain battalions. They'd look on my disposition chart and want to move people around so that they could pick up a battalion or two. I'd

get a directive to do something or move the SLF...I'd have the SLF committed somewhere and they wanted it on short notice without giving me an opportunity to respond. These kinds of discussions were bound to happen when high mobility is the mode. There is bound to be some communication breakdown, and there was.

Q: Do you think that III MAF, being where it was, was fully alert to conditions that you faced?

Davis: They couldn't have been, because it's a distance problem. They didn't have the same situation down there at all. Their primary concern was the rocket belt. I was down there enough to know that everything vibrated around that rocket belt and doing what I was doing was grinding up a lot of resources that could have been applied in the rocket belt.

I could sympathize with / ^{that} because the effectiveness of their operations ^{or not} could be measured in terms of whether/the enemy had the capability of coming in and throwing rockets against Danang. That was one of the measuring sticks for their success. When I arrived up in the 3d Division, that was kind of a measuring stick, too...how many rounds you're getting in the CP every day.

Well, I don't like that kind of operation at all. I don't like any rounds in my CP ever if I can avoid it. And so we got out and captured 4,000 rockets in those mountains.

Q: Do you think that the brigade-type organization would have been much more effective for the Marine Corps in Vietnam? Given the nature of its operations?

by some definitions
Davis: No, /that's really what we had. Bob

Barrow's 9th Marines had all its normal support with it all the time. I would never break up that direct support-- the same communicators, the same engineers, the same everything was always there. The way I learned how to operate in Korea and in World War II was to value the integrity of units. initially That was the first shift I made/as I got these outfits out of their holes, so to speak. I put the units back together, so that my eight or ten months in that division, the battalions and the companies always had the same artillery behind them, always. Never let them get away. The same engineers with them. That's just the way to build a competent force. I don't mean that we have to be so inflexible that in an emergency we can't peel off a piece to go somewhere. But as soon as that emergency is over, we got it back together, because that's the way you build competence in them, having forces together in a unity of effort as a team.

Q: What you had then with the reinforced regiments was in effect the brigade-type organization...

Davis: Yes.

Q: And I think that the task force groups, Task Force X-Ray, Task Force Hotel, and so on, were, in effect, brigade-type organizations, were they not?

Davis: Well, Task Force Hotel was kind of a forward headquarters for the division. They had 500 tons of supplies a day going out there and the whole effort of support, communication-wise, medical, the running of Vandegrift, that whole effort was more than just the tactical employment of the troops in the area.

Q: Since you mentioned Vandegrift, I'll throw out a question about the fire support bases, which burgeoned under you...this was a step further beyond getting the troops out of their foxholes and on the offensive and to make your operations more successful and support them more fully, the concept was the fire support bases. Is this true?

Davis: Yes. The concept was a result of an enemy situation. Once we got going, we found that the only way we could get at an enemy who was totally foot bound and who operated the way the Vietnamese operated, was to get out in his territory. We discovered, as I have described in some other interviews, that his logistics system as designed not only to support his main, his regiments and division, but also his local forces, his companies and whatever, was keyed on prepositioned supplies. He would start down through Laos or through the DMZ and about every 10

miles establish a concealed base. He brought his supplies as far as he could by truck and from there when he was exposed to our air he had to get it moved by hand. His porters would carry for about a night's walk, about 10 miles. He had to prepare each next place with bunkers and tunnels and hideaways, so that his porters could leave their supplies there and not be subjected to our air attacks. So, it was a series of hiding places along well-built, high speed trails, well camouflaged so that they were not detectable from the air. Once we discovered this system and how it worked, we could start to pick it apart. Our little four-man recon teams were scattered all over the place. When they discovered one of these high-speed trails, it was really evident that it was on the main route of their logistics system. We could quickly ferret out the whole system.

So, in very short order, by going on top of the pinacles near these key places, we quickly tore up his entire logistics system for 30 or 40 miles through the area and his people then had no supplies. They'd run out of ammunition, radio batteries and food, and everything that had been coming down through this channel. That was why we went to the mountain tops and into isolated areas, because that was where the enemy effort was.

Q: That was essentially the rationale for mounting out Dewey Canyon.

Absolutely,
Davis: / because we discovered that he
was positioning what ultimately turned out to be a division
supply dump just on the border of Laos and Vietnam.

Q: For an extremely primitive type of operation, it was
a highly successful operation on the part of the enemy, and
I noted in listening to your tapes, the interviews and the
debriefing, that you were, you gave the Vietnamese considerable
credit for being able to mount these out...

Davis: Yes.

Q: They were very resourceful...

Davis: They had to be! They had to be, because they had so
little going for them in the kind of things we have.
Their transport down to their sanctuaries, sure, they could
use trucks and they got some of them in the A Shau
Valley. I went out there with the Army's operation where
the/ enemy had built roads and totally camouflaged them. Later, in
the northern part of our area, they had built a road where
we discovered when we went in there that they had trees and
bushes planted in wooden pots which during the day they could
pull out in the middle of the road and make them look
like trees and bushes. When they came by with their trucks
at night, a lot of troops / stationed along there would pull the
trees out of the road.

Q: It seems to me that infra-red aerial photography would
have exposed this.

Davis: Well, yes, we picked it up, but I say that they did

enough of this around to show how much ingenuity they have, and how much determination they had. In some of our bombing of the roads,

I remember, we

plotted out very carefully some of the key choke points on the road, where they were hauling with their supplies.

We went in there with large bombs and just knocked that road totally out. ^{From} / pictures of it and flights over there in a helicopter to look at it, it was just totally knocked out. But before the next morning, they had repaired that road; they had mobilized hundreds of peasants and repaired that road and were running trucks over it. It was just unbelievable.

They apparently had an abundance of manpower stationed around. We saw some of that before we found a huge cache of rice below Khe Sanh. Our reconnaissance teams observed truck traffic coming into a remote area a couple of hours during the night.

about
They discovered that/every 50 to 100 yards down that road they had an individual stationed and he was apparently a road repairman. Anytime there was a truck breakdown or anything like that, they'd just assemble from everywhere and give it a push or fill up the road, or what have you; they had enormous manpower support in their logistics effort.

Q: It certainly extended us.

Davis: Oh yes, but once we got going, they couldn't survive.

I objected to one of the words used in a question here, the "stalemate," there was no stalemate in Quang Tri Province. We totally whipped them and ran them off. They had no capability of doing anything in that province in the middle of '69.

Q: Yes, we'll get down to that. What was your estimate of the ARVN command in I Corps, that is, the corps commander and the commanders of the 1st and 2d ARVN Divisions? I know that you've spoken most highly of Colonel Giai; I see a picture of him over there...

Davis: Yes, Giai and Truong. Truong was the division commander. Lam down at Da Nang I didn't know very much, I mean I didn't work with him a great deal. He was pleasant enough and apparently he had told his division commanders to get it done and to get along with us. I know that Truong, the 1st Division commander up in Hue, was exceptional. When I went up to Dong Ha, I had a feeling that with the division staff and Colonel Giai, and the others, there was not a close enough relationship, and there existed some suspicious attitudes, some feeling of mistrust.

Well, here again, I was fortunate in working with Bill Rosson, in seeing General Truong almost every day, and gained a great deal of respect and admiration for Truong the first few weeks that I was out there. Truong apparently responded to my efforts the same way. / ^{But} when we went into the first Giai's headquarters there at Dong Ha / few times, and I sensed some feeling of mutual distrust between Giai's headquarters,

his regiment, and/^{3d}Division. So I / ^{directed} the division staff-- one of my early sessions with the staff--that we were going to do everything we ^{could} / to make that the most effective regiment in the Vietnamese Army and that we were going to do everything we can to support Giaai. He was going to become a winner! I even went so far to tell

them one day that "If he's in a fight, we're going to see him win if we have to surround both sides and stay there until he wins!"

I really didn't know what the situation was, but there was some feeling that he couldn't win.

And then I started visiting him every day and treating him like an equal...

Q: He was only what, a lieutenant colonel or colonel then?

Davis: A lieutenant / ^{colonel,} but he was a regimental commander of a major unit...he had about five or six battalions, he had the biggest regiment in Vietnam.

And so, in the process of this, I heard from one of the Army liaison officers over there that, when I was telling my staff that we were going to do everything / ^{Giaai} wants done and help him in every way to make this an effective force, Giaai was told at the same breath by Truong that, "You are to do everything that you can, and do everything exactly the way that General Davis wants it done."

Q: So, it worked two ways.

Davis: Yes, here we are, both competing to see who could do best by the other guy. It just turned out to be a perfect

relationship. He was a fireball,^a crackerjack, and I was totally distressed to hear that he got killed after he made brigadier general. We took him on operations out in the mountains, these helicopterborne operations.

His force performed effectively--I thought really top notch. It got him in trouble later in going to Laos, because he got so good at helicopter-borne operations, that when it came time to go to Laos, I think that they overdid it. I think that they got themselves overextended into Laos without the capability that we had to support that kind of high mobility operation.

Q: Of course they got creamed.

Davis: Well, of course, that was our fault. I was just horrified. I was sitting in Washington at the time to see that on the day that they were supposed to jump off that we pulled off their advisors, we pulled off their secure communications, we pulled off their capability to control their helicopters adequately, we just totally stripped them. Here they are, poised for an air-mobility type operation, and we stripped them of any capability at all to make it succeed on the day they jumped off. We lost over 100 Army helicopters as their operation failed.

Q: Well, whose idea was it to mount that operation is a question I don't think that has been satisfactorily answered. If it were U.S. sponsored, and pulling in that stuff...

Davis: Well, yes, and it got leaked to the press and some of our antis put enough pressure on the President to have him

say at the last day, "Don't support it now." I don't know how all that happened or why all that happened, but I know that's what happened. After they got it all ready to go, the press got onto it...

Q: The plans were to have Americans support that?

Davis: Well, it was never / ^{considered} that their units would do anything without some of the crucial support we were giving them. We were providing them with ammunition, machines, rifles, and helicopters, but when you provide a unit with helicopters in that situation and decide at the last minute to pull / ^{out} those things which make helicopters work, it's idiocy.

Q: It was a bad show.

Davis: It just wrecked them. It gave the war to the North Vietnamese, that colossal failure that we promoted in that operation.

Q: Vietnamization.

Davis: I mean, it just wrecked them. They lost their best forces in there.

Q: Did you ever use or obtain Vietnamese Air Force air support? And if so, with what degree of success and accomplishment? Did you ever have to depend on them?

Davis: Very rare. We had some and they performed. I just recall a few instances where they came up and dropped some ordnance, supported some of our operations, but nothing

of substance that I can recall.

Q: Under the single management system, were you able to obtain sufficient Marine air support or support from other sources?

Davis: I'd be hard pressed to remember specifics. I recall that our air package was significantly cut down from time to time under the single management system and that we lost the a lot of/flexibility that we had, but I'd be hard pressed to spell it out right now. In addition, our operations tapered off as we cleared the enemy out of Quang Tri province.

Q: I think that some of the criticism of single management arose from the bad memories of JOC in Korea, where it took so long for air support of any type to appear on the scene. Was that the case in Vietnam?

Davis: Again, single management means overcentralization. When you overcentralize anything, the result is bad. The B-52 support was so centralized that they were projecting so many strikes per day, and the only way that they could get that many was to have it so that nobody could wiggle it the least bit. If it wiggled the least bit, they would lose a couple of sorties, the timing would be off, and it would look bad on their record. The B-52 Arclight got so centralized that it was more important to dump tons of bombs per day than to affect the immediate enemy situation. I finally made an inroad on that on two occasions. We convinced them that we could, if the Arclight went into this area at a specific time, launch forces in there and get much more out of the Arclight. Because, if there are any enemy forces

there, you know, they were dazed, they were hurt, they were disrupted, but they soon recovered. Whereas, if you could put a force in there, then you destroy the force. We demonstrated that a couple of times and had some agreement

that, yes, the B-52 Arcflight strike can be coordinated with ground maneuver. Up to that time we used it to mass destruct an area, not to say that, "We're to have this on 8:30 on this day because we want to put forces in there." That was a no-no for a long time.

Q: Are you categorizing B-52s as close air support type aircraft?

Davis: Whatever categorization you want to put on it, fine, but the point is that whatever weapon system you have, it is more exploitable to use it in a precise way to get maximum benefit from it by, in this case, but putting troops in where the strike has been conducted. I don't think that that fits the definition of close air support.

Q: As we know it. Were you always able to obtain as much air support as you wanted or needed? If it wasn't Marine air support.

Davis: It wasn't a volume thing/numbers. It was flexibility in terms of because our operations were so totally flexible and so dependent upon enemy, weather, and so forth. There's no way a ground commander can work out a precise plan for the next day's operations unless the enemy is going to hold still

and unless the weather is going to hold still, and that is what we were faced with. We were faced with a system that was so centralized that you have got to work out in detail the day before exactly what you want and schedule it. Many times, in these situations, you wouldn't know you were not going to get it until after H-hour. That happened to me many times, when an operation wouldn't go and we hadn't even heard that the support wasn't^{to be}/available.

Q: How would you compare the quality of close air support with say that of Korea? The nature of it had to change by type of equipment, type of platforms.

Davis: Yes, In Korea we had the one division and the one wing, and so the Marine family was so closely hooked together and we had aviators attached to ground units as air liaison units who were actually flying in the squadrons. I had my air liaison officer get on his jeep and cajole those pilots up there and tell them what they were going to do or he is going to beat their ass off the next night.

It was that kind of a close relationship with planes on station and planes in the immediate area of our operations. I thought everybody was as good as you could get in Korea at the time. We didn't have the helicopters, we didn't have the complications that we had in Vietnam.

On the other hand, as far as Marine air in Vietnam is concerned, the air commanders out there were the closest personal friends, Chick Quilter was a classmate of mine in Basic School, and McCutcheon and Anderson and I had just the

very closest association with them. I had total confidence in them, and I think they in me, and we had no serious problem except this flexibility problem. Plus a disagreement over the need that I felt for an on-the-sight aviation commander that I could talk to, and work with, and plan with, and change plans with, and have him turn to the pilots and say, "Do it." ^{This} / opposed to corresponding back and forth with Da Nang to see if they could do it.

Q: You've talked about the close relationship of your controllers with the pilots and with their ground units during the Korean War, what about the controllers during the Vietnam era? Was it the attitude of these pilots that they'd rather be flying or did they have a very close relationship with the ground elements?

End, Side 2, Tape 1

Begin, Side 1, Tape 2

Q: We were talking about the relationship of the pilots with the ground people.

Davis: Yes, those pilots were assigned to the ground people. No, I thought that the attitude and relationship was a very fine one. Of course, I wasn't as close to it as I was in Korea because in Korea I was with a ground unit right on the ground, and here I am flying around in my helicopter.

But, certainly at the division, the regiment, and the battalion level, there was a very close relationship. I don't know who these pilots were in terms of the support

aircraft. I don't know whether they were primarily helicopter pilots or tactical aircraft pilots or who they were. So I don't know whether this same relationship I felt in Korea continued in Vietnam or not insofar as the pilot getting into his jeep and talking to his squadron buddies overhead.

Q: You went tooling around in your helicopter as division commander. Did you ever get behind the controls?

Davis: No.

Q: I know a lot of senior ground officers got the itch and got themselves helicopter qualified.

Davis: Yes, I was aware of that and I didn't for a very good reason. First, I've never been really anxious to fly machines, so I didn't have any urge, but my primary reason was that I was a commander in a helicopter and I was in and out all the time. I found out early in the game out there that if you're in the front seat, it's harder to get in and out. If you're in the back seat, you've got your communications. You see, we had to carry our own secure communications with us, separate from those installed in the airplane. So, if I wanted to operate my secure ground communications and I wanted to work with my staff officers and my aide and so forth, I needed to be back in the general helicopter fuselage as opposed to being isolated up front. So that's the reason I didn't do it, because I wanted to command from back there, and be free to get in and out often and quickly.

Q: Did you have as good a view of the ground from back there?

Davis: Oh yes. All you had to do was tell the pilot what you wanted to look at, and he would ensure that you got all the look you wanted, and I was in and out all the time. They were letting me down in very rough terrain, where they couldn't even touch down, just hover enough for me to climb in and out. Well, you can't do that up front. Another key point was that in those areas where you're in bad weather or close combat, you need two pilots up front. I think it was a serious mistake for a commander to take/ ^{a front seat.} In fact, I ran into this one time when General Cushman came up and we were going out in the hills. We couldn't go out in his helicopter because he had only one pilot and you needed two pilots. He liked to ride in the front seat, so he had limited his ability to operate in a combat arena by not having two pilots in his airplane. We got over in an old beat-up helicopter and it looked like hell, but it had two pilots, and we could go where we needed to go.

Q: You mentioned on the tape that you were flying the Hueys and the fact that you were very unhappy with the Huey that the Marines had. It didn't have the power that the Hotel configured...

Davis: Oh yes. You see, I was spoiled initially because General Rosson gave me my own Huey Hotel and crew and

the machine gunners and all that power, and we went in to all of these out-of-the-way places and these hilltops and through all this weather, and as soon as I got my Marine Huey, it couldn't hack it. It just didn't have the lift.

In fact, I got flopped down two or three times with those Hueys, in a situation that was such a close call, such a dangerous situation, that the pilots got fired from piloting my aircraft--not by me, but by Homer Dan Hill. Just as soon as he heard that they had flopped me down in a field somewhere, because they had lost control of the aircraft, he knew they had it overloaded for the heat and altitude.

Q: Did they get fired as pilots?

Davis: No, just as OG's pilots. They went back to flying supplies and other things, I guess.

Q: I take it that the Marine air chain of command was aware of this deficiency.

Davis: Oh yes, every time I had trouble, they knew about it.

Q: No, I'm talking about the underpowering and the Marine need for a better machine.

Davis: Well, they knew because I had told them every day, and they always wanted to know why I had that Army helicopter sitting up there at division headquarters. Well, I had it up there because Stilwell knew what my problem was. Stilwell was a man like Rosson was; he was

out in the hills all the time. We were flying around in all kinds of weather and out-of-the-way places and hill-tops and the mountains and he knew, Stilwell knew, that those Marine helicopters could not go where the "H" model could go. And so he provided me with one full time, backup, because he knew I had to be out there. There was no way I could command a division and not be able to get out in those mountains.

Q: You were talking about going out there and dropping down-- of course I recall the PR flak that came through about Uncle Lew dropping in, the "Big Grunt from the Skies" coming down, and it might have been a good PR bit on his part, but given his predilections as a ground officer, an infantry officer of considerable experience, he undoubtedly wanted to see what was going on on the ground himself, which apparently is the rationale for your having done so.

Davis: Well, the helicopter to me took us back to the days of Stonewall Jackson, and I was a student of Stonewall Jackson in my early years. In fact my Basic School presentation for the year was on Stonewall Jackson and his campaigns. On his horse, he could sense where the problem was and where the shooting was--you know, to the sound of the guns. Stonewall was off on his horse and get the problem resolved on the ground. Well, the helicopter to me was putting us back to that age for the first time. In World War II and Korea, there was no way for the commanders to get there, because they had to walk. It was too far, they were confined to the roads by the

jeeps, and so on. There was no way for the commander to get there. But in this age of the helicopter, you'd know where the problem is and you could go there and influence it, successfully influence it. You could talk to people on the radio and so forth all you want, but you are not going to get a precise indication of what's going on and what you could do about it without going there. That's the thing that takes commanders to the scene of the action.

I don't mean you seek out a rifle company in the middle of a firefight and go sit down on top of a company commander. But you could go up and see where it is and what it is and get to a nearby place and sit down and talk with his adjacent units or his battalion commander and so forth and see what you could do to influence it. Sometimes there is a conflict; maybe you've got three companies going at once, with reports coming in all reading ^{exactly} the same. But you get out there, you see that one is much more serious than the other, and therefore you can shift the artillery resources and the air resources and the other things to the most serious place. That's, to me, the essential part of command.

Q: You've anticipated my next question when you said that it wasn't your aim to look over the shoulder of company commanders, but, given the nature of the fighting in Vietnam--that is, being essentially small unit actions--the regimental commander very often had nothing to do. That's oversimplification, but it was either the battalion commander or the company commander

who was really committed.

Davis: Once I got those regiments back together, the key to the success of Dewey Canyon was Bob Barrow as regimental commander, because he was out there with them. He was the guy out there with the forces. He eventually had four battalions out there.

No, I think they all had an essential part to play. The tough part on the battalion commander and the regimental commander was lack of helicopter command ships. I saw companies more often than the battalion commander, because I had access to them with my helicopter. I had a helicopter strapped on my back to go at any time. He had difficulty getting a helicopter to go and see his company commanders.

Q: I was thinking of the earlier days when General Walt was out there, that considerable, that he did do this thing which you said you didn't do, overseeing the operation of the company commander or the platoon leader in effect, and that there was, it seems to me, a large degree, a large number of reliefs that were being made, because of this...

Davis: In the small units?

Q: Well, the small units, the battalion commanders being relieved for cause, because the MAF commander was out there and making immediate value judgements which perhaps he might not have made had he had better perception or the luxury of time and space in which to make a more considered judgement as to the quality of the leadership in the field in particular in-

stances.

Davis: Well, yes and no. I'm not proud of this, but I guess I relieved as many battalion commanders as anybody. It must have been five of them over^a period, but it wasn't because of any flush, immediate judgement. It^{was} because of performance over a period where they were getting too many Marines killed, not responding to the kind of operation that we wanted to conduct, or some good substantial reason.

Q: This is a question that I've asked some of the other interviewees whom I've interviewed about Vietnam per se, and that is, quality of the Marine officer, the Marine commander in Vietnam, the battalion commander, company commanders, too, perhaps, as opposed to say Korea or World War II. Were there as many reliefs, to your knowledge, in Vietnam, or more reliefs in the previous two wars?

Davis: I believe that there were more in my division than I was otherwise aware of, but it wasn't because of a low quality battalion commander, but it was because he was not a totally outstanding superior quality guy who could do some of these near-impossible things that had to be done. In other words, the very good to excellent officer can perform an awful lot of things, but when you've got Marines' lives at stake, and you can use an excellent to outstanding officer who can ensure that he's going to get it done with least casualties, then you've got to make the change. So, that was the situation I found myself into. I had some people that just

couldn't quite respond to the demands of these operations, and as I told General Buse one time, when he visited my first operation, "Robin," and I had E. J.

Miller as the 4th Marines' commander. He ran the first helicopterborne, high-mobility operation down south of Khe Sanh, and General Buse came to visit, and we were going over the details. On the way back to the CP, I told him that I looked over the roster of colonels coming in and I knew that Bob Barrow and two or three people I knew were coming to Vietnam, and I had just heard that they were all going to the 1st Division. I told him that ⁱⁿ the kind of operation he had just observed, it should be obvious to him that this demanded a top-quality guy, and like Bob Barrow, for example. I said, "I've heard that he's going to the 1st Division, and this one's going to the 1st Division," I've forgotten who the other two were, "But," I said, "of those three, I want to make a special appeal that at least one be sent up here to run this mountain operation for me," and so I got Barrow in that conversation. You know, he'd been assigned to the 1st Division

Q: Well, in a combat situation in any war, the demands for leadership and command qualities are always high. Would you say that given the nature of the Vietnam fighting they were even higher? Was greater independence of action and...

Davis: Yes.

Q: ...greater demands on initiative...

Davis: Yes, I think that that's a fair statement.

As long as they were holed up in those battalion positions and not permitted to do anything, it didn't make as much difference. But/once they got out and were assigned

high mobility operations or some of these later operations that put a battalion commander and his troops in the middle of Vietnam Popular Forces. They / ^{it did} "You get this area under control. You train these people to do the job." I described in^a/Gazette article, where we went in to a whole area where there were no night ambushes, just nothing happening, the Reds were overrunning the place, and the people are being put upon, and in 60 days a good battalion commander or company commander could/^{go in and} straighten that whole thing out. Train the forces, prepare the defenses, get their night ambushes out. This did require, I think, a superior Marine commander and I think, in the main, we had them. I know we had them.

Q: Do you think that the training bases back in the States, the divisions and the schools, were adequately preparing commanders from a company- and field-grade level officer on up for this type of fighting? After all, given the mission and functions of the Marine Corps, that its amphibious posture... this is entirely different.

Davis: I think that what they were doing was pretty much on target. Yes, they came out there in top-flight physical condition. They came out there knowing how to operate their

and their troops
equipment and their weapons and take care of themselves/and
that's what it was about. The rifle companies would stay out
there sometime for 60 days at a time, out in the bush.
They had kind of a contest going to see who could get the
record for staying out in the bush longest.
One of my problems was to force them to stop and cut an LZ
so we could get a helicopter in there in case they had
casualties or if they ran out of supplies, or something. We
had to have some LZs along the trail to help them out. They
were so proud of their operations and being out in the bush
on their own, you know, they didn't want the old man giving
them too much of a visit or attention...

Q: You had a high state of morale, then?

Davis: Outstanding! I've dwelled on this in some of my prior
interviews. It's just astounding to me how...and the shift
came when you took them out of their fixed positions and
turned them loose so they could get a sense of real accomplish-
ment. I had an announced "law" that nobody could lose
a skirmish. There is no such thing as ending up the next
day not having won the skirmish, because we would pile the
support and troops and whatever it took to ensure that we
won the skirmish. They had to win, and always win at
no great sacrifice. Any time an outfit got
chopped up pretty bad, the first question that I wanted to
know from the battalion commander was how many rounds of artillery
they had, and if they didn't have enough, then he
was criticized for not having it. / As long as a unit's in trouble,

the way to get it out is to pour on the support to get him out.

Q: Had you gone out to Vietnam after you commissioning and graduation from Basic School in '36 and schooling in the Small Wars Manual, would you have found that the Vietnam situation was a familiar environment?

Davis: I don't know. One of my instructors was Lewie Puller, so he gave us a blow by blow of Nicaragua and Santo Domingo and so forth in such a way that I certainly felt that I knew a lot about it, and I think the answer to that is "yes." I very dutifully studied in great detail the infantry in battle book, you know, which described infantry operations in World War I, listened very carefully to Lewie Puller and others who had done these things. I think that I would have done as well as anybody in Vietnam after Basic School based on what they had done for us. I had a 10-month course.

Q: What I'm trying to ask, the Marine Corps experience in this type of environment had been such that if we had gone back to basic details, basic concepts that were taught in the '30s, we wouldn't have found this so-called counterinsurgency operations so unique. It was like rediscovering the wheel, and that there were some things that existed in the doctrine that was taught in Basic School in the '30s that should have been, it seems to me, could have been well applied if, in fact they weren't.

Davis: Yes, that's true. On counterinsurgency, it seemed to

me to that after our operations had proceeded some extent up in northern I Corps, that there was a general misunderstanding of the basic problem of insurgency in Vietnam in this way. I describe this in some detail in prior interviews, that there was no way to manage the ^{people} / down in this area so long as the enemy had free access to them. As long as he had the capability of installing his people in there with threats of death or kidnapping if they didn't do as they were told. People are going to respond to the guy who's in there at night telling them how to react.

Well, this guy / ^{was} in there at night because he had a base somewhere from which out here/ he can operate and be supplied and supported communications, --batteries, ammunition, and so forth. He was supported by an organization, some kind of a company organization,

and that's supported by major installations which are in turn supported by a division or security regiment. And where we missed, I thought, the main

point of the whole thing was that the locals can be cleaned up very quickly once you get rid of the support. Once we got these divisions gone and these regiments ineffective and this logistics system torn up, we could go in and clean a village out and it'd stay cleaned out. That's what happened in northern I Corps and that's what happened in many parts of Vietnam/^{as} when they sent General Truong down to the Delta. That's what he was doing down in the Delta. So, late in the war, I think we started to experience what it took to handle an insurgency situation and we could have easily won that war with very little effort after that.

Q: Well, you wanted to go into the DMZ and you wanted to mount an amphibious attack north of the DMZ, didn't you?

Davis: Only because that was the only way you could win the war in a hurry. You know, we could have left our forces out there forever and South Vietnam would have been secure forever. It never would have fallen if we had left our forces out there and we would never have had any sizable casualties. I think we had sustained most of the casualties necessary to secure the place, but there's no way of staying there forever. But having committed so much of our wealth and the blood of our young people into that operation, it just seemed inconceivable to me that we shouldn't win it when it would have been so easy to do from ^{the} / stage we had reached.

You see, I had been to meetings where General Lam would ask the assembled group, "How many enemy regiments are in this area?" He'd wave his hand around a map, and there were 18 or 20, around there. And he'd ask, "How many regiments do I have?" (and he had a third that many) then he'd say, "Do you think that the U.S. can go home?"

This illustrated the problem that he was faced with, because we were providing a sanctuary 1300 miles along around his forces with the capability of the enemy ganging up on him anywhere. We were leaving an unfinished war in the hands of the Vietnamese with no hope that they could sustain it. So, when we departed, we said in effect, "Reds, you can have it."

In fact, back to conclusion of the war, there's no other way to do it except to go in and destroy their forces and con-

vince them they couldn't win, and it would have been easy enough for us to do it. We had enough force out there in '68-'69 to have done anything we wanted. I don't propose marching to Hanoi, but if you had taken, say, the bottom 60 miles of North Vietnam, in my view, they would have felt obligated to throw their forces against us, and they would have destroyed themselves in that. When you're sitting on 60 miles of his real estate, you have something to bargain about.

Q: You were being punished pretty heavily by the 122s from the DMZ, weren't you?

Davis: Not for long. Initially, yes, but, you see, we got that under control with the 8-inch. It was an accuracy thing, and I relate some of this in a prior interview. When we had that sophisticated sensor-computer device up there at Con Thien, it was totally amazing to me. It would take all the sensing devices, flash, sound, radars, and infra-red, they had everything you can imagine feeding information into this computer. There'd be a shot fired over there by a 122, and the computer would tell the 8-inch exactly where it was in seconds. The 8-inch would shoot at it, and then the computer would tell the 8-inch where its fall of shot was compared to where the gun was. We were just killing those guys. We had air observers up and there was a short period when we destroyed some 40 of their weapons. We had pictures of them with the tube just knocked off the carriage and another 40 that were turned over or turned around.

The Reds were ready to quit when the bombing halt came.

They weren't hurting us at all. So the only gain we had from the bombing halt was that they quit shooting at us when actually they had no capability to shoot anyway.

Q: What was the nature of the enemy threat when you had the 3d Division?

Davis: When I was there, we were faced with five different divisions of ^{a total of} / 14 that the Reds had. Five of them were in my backyard or frontyard at one time or another. But, they all left, and so far as I know, not one of them ^{returned} /after we had really worked them over. We had a concept of totally surrounding them and annihilating every force we could get in^{to} a trap--staying right on them until we got them all captured or killed.

Q: Were they aggressive?

Davis: Their capability went down very quickly after one or two skirmishes. Now when the ^{enemy} / (I think it was the 320th Division) came down towards Dong Ha the first time, they were very aggressive and killed a lot of Marines and a lot of ARVN. But in turn, a lot of their leaders got killed, and you could see it in the ^{loss of effectiveness in their} / supporting arms. In the first few skirmishes we had with them, a company caught in ^{big} a/mortar barrage really got hurt. A month later, they'd shoot a 100 rounds and not even hit the company area. --just scatter ^{rounds} / all over--because they had lost their trained people and their leaders. With this, their aggressive-ness went down, their effectiveness disintegrated.

and moved north. of
 So they withdrew/ I don't know/any one of those five
 divisions that came back within a two-year period. I
 for
 watched/them. I knew those divisions and I watched/for them
 when I got back to Washington. I don't know of any
 one of them that got recommitted in less than two years--so
 completely had they been destroyed.

Q: This is the question that you are critical of. How
 would you characterize the period 1 January to 14 April 1969?
 Were the Marines making any progress in their contest with
 the NVA or was the period a stalemate as some people have
 said? I don't know who those people are and I didn't prepare
 this question.

Davis: (laughs) The reason that I reacted to "stalemate" is
 because this is one of those words that lost the war for us.
 You know, the news people out there and^{many of}the people in the
 Pentagon and White House and elsewhere thought we had some
 kind of a stalemate. When you think in those terms, you
 know, you've got^a/kind of equality, and there was none
 of that. I go into great detail in another interview to
 describe how we had total control of Quang Tri Province.
 concerned or

I was not the least bit/disturbed. In fact, one night
 during one of the national celebrations(I forget which one
 it was) I was out in a jeep in the middle of the countryside
 attending a celebration with one of the ARVN offi-
 cials, the district chief, in an area miles from anybody.
 I felt totally safe and secure out in the countryside in a
 village at 11 o'clock at night. It was that secure in that

province. There just wasn't anything going on except once or twice, when they organized a suicide mission and got inside one of the fire bases. We caught hell for a couple of hours with a lot of our troops killed or hurt. But the enemy invaders were destroyed or captured to the last man.

Q: You commented on your prior interview on the quality of the sappers.

Davis: Oh yes. They apparently had the patience and other capability that suits their personality. These peasants are people of the terrain--the woods and fields--and had a special capability. We found places where they used little tree perches and enormous field glasses (approximately 20 power) to plot our exact layout, record our exact habits. One night we put a fresh unit into a position and were a little careless about double checking the security. We didn't have enough trip wire and other devices. They knew exactly where our listening posts were--I guess they'd seen them coming and going. So they avoided those. They came up through an area where we had been burning trash. We had a trash dump just out of the perimeter of the wire. The fire had gone out but I guess there were some pretty hot coals. They came right through that trash dump at a time when both our artillery and our mortars were firing with plenty of noise and smoke and so on. Organized into three or four little four-man teams on suicide missions, they got inside our perimeter. It was a rough hour, as I recall. They killed about 25 Marines before they all were in turn killed.

Q: Concerning Dewey Canyon itself, we may be reinventing the wheel, did you have some specific intelligence beforehand or did you proceed on the assumption that there must be something out there in the Da Krong Valley, so let's see what we can find?

Davis: No, we had precise indications. The most obvious one was a telegraph line that we had picked up in a photograph. They had a trail system of sorts, and you could see this line, two wires with insulators going up through the area. But you don't run that kind of a major effort unless you have something bigger going on. We started to see then more and more activity going on in the area, and a road being built with portable trees and bushes that were moving in and out for camouflage. We started putting recon teams in there and got more evidence of activity. Before they had gone down a road into the A Shau Valley with a big supply build-up before the Army went after them in early '68 and cleaned it out. This time instead of using that old road, a new road was built up into the Da Krong Valley, which was north of the A Shau. So that gave us a clear indication that that area needed to be looked at. More and more small recon units were in to stake out the place, to find out where and what the effort was.

I don't recall that we knew the full extent of it, but we

estimated (correctly) that they had a whole division supply dump in there. We got 1200 machine guns, 4000 bicycle tires, and I think it was 2200 big rockets, and we just got an enormous cache of ammunition. ^{also} We/captured those two big cannons (122mm guns) in there.

Q: Marine helicopter activities during the operation have been characterized as being extremely poor, and you've explained that; the weather situation, weather conditions, and that "if it hadn't been for the medevac helicopters, Marine air, particularly helicopters, would have taken a complete black eye." Again I don't know who this is quoted from. Do you agree or disagree with this assessment?

Davis: (laughs) No, I disagree with the tenor of that. As the weather closed in, I recall one of the companies had a unit chopped up way out on top of a hill somewhere right down on the Laotian border--as I recall it was C Company of the 9th Marines. It was ordered, as the weather closed in, to work itself back down to an area where we hoped we could get some help to them, get their casualties out. They were running out of food, and it was just terrible torment for the troopers. They made it.

I seem to remember that the Army helicopters, the Army medevac helicopters were the ones to get to them, but I'm not sure of that. I'm remembering that that's what brought this on. But it was just one incident--not indicative of the general situation.

Q: According to the men on the ground, Army helicopters used

in the troop lifts were much preferred over the Marine helicopters. Do you think that this was an accurate or valid appraisal? Were Marine pilots too cautious? We've dealt with that earlier.

Davis: No. I don't think that we should ever, ever criticize Marine pilots. Now/ ^{for} the machines themselves--we used on occasion Army Hueys to put some small units into places in those mountains where Marine Hueys couldn't get and where the space wasn't big enough for the CH-46. It's a big twin-rotored affair, you know, and it takes more room.

Now, there ^{were} / some places where the design of the helicopter made it desirable to use Army, and as we were in the XXIV Corps and had access to the best means, ^{pilots.} we used them. This is no criticism of Marine helicopter/ They did just some impossible things. I had Bill Coggins up on top of a precipice one night with a casualty who was going to die.

The last 150 feet of this mountain crag was covered with fog, and this Marine/^{flyer} took an H-34 helicopter, went down to the bottom of this cliff. ^{From here he} / had his crew chief hang out underneath with a radio mike and coach him up the side of the cliff in this fog just by telling him how far it was from the face of this cliff. He got up on top of the cliff and got the Marine out.

Q: That's guts!

Davis: Oh, I would never criticize those pilots for lack of guts. I thought they needed better machines. As I say, I didn't even know what the problems were. I don't know whether it was

possible for the Marine Corps to get a few Army helicopters or not. I certainly thought that if they got one for me I might have a better chance to survive. (laughs)

Q: Concerning Lam Son 719, the Laos incursion, from statements you made during and after the operation, one can assume that you fully supported it. Was this support active or passive?

Davis: This was this little incursion into Laos of Winecoff's?

Q: No sir, it was the big one.

Davis: I wasn't out there then.

Q: Well, maybe it was Winecoff's incursion.

Davis: There / wasn't much to that and (it's not generally known)

I wasn't even there. I was up in Hong Kong on R & R, but it was not that much of a deal. Barrow, the acting division CG, and the Corps commander, Dick Stilwell, else all agreed with it. I don't know who/had how much fore-knowledge. Briefly, this is what happened: we were pushing up against some Vietnamese forces down at the far end of the Dewey Canyon operation and intercepted a radio message from them to a truck convoy describing how to get in there and when to come and so forth. It sounded as if it was a major effort to reinforce them.

With that, the local commander said, "Hell, I'm going to shoot those trucks up before they get there," and went over and did it. And it was only a few yards

inside of Laos, because that's just how the road happened

to bend toward the border. Where he could best ambush them just happened to be a stone's throw inside of Laos. This was well within the commander's authority to take any means necessary to protect his force.

Q: With regards to Dewey Canyon, did it accomplish all that you wanted it to?

Davis: Oh, yes. I think that is true without reservation. We had some difficult challenges which meant much in terms of lessons learned. We convinced ourselves for the first time that we could operate in any kind of weather in any kind of terrain. It forced on us the realization that even in fog and mountains and so forth (you've got to be wary of them) you can't let the enemy get away just because of them. In other words, we got away from the idea that you operate your forces only under certain favorable conditions. We gained, I think, a valuable experience lesson, that being that you can operate in the most adverse conditions that anybody can dream up. On that we gained more than we went for. We didn't expect those kind of conditions. We expected maybe to have it half that bad, whereby on the third day at least we'd get access to our forces, instead of the 11 days of an almost solid block of fog.

As far as what we went after, destroying that whole enemy area and getting all of his supplies, we did well. I don't think we left much down there. Maybe some over in Laos. I asked to go over and continue the search of this area inside of Laos. The North Vietnamese didn't care where the boundary was and they were just picking the best places to put the stuff. So I was a little bit put out because some of the supply dumps we found went right up to the border and we were not permitted to go and see if we could find any on the other side.

Q: Were you dissatisfied with any of the results or performance of any of the units involved?

Davis: In that operation? No, no. In some of the other operations, but not that one. You see, here's the culmination of Bob Barrow and the 9th Marines being together as a team for the better part of a year. It was just/^{an}absolute, superb performance based on experience, experience, experience.

Q: This was probably one of the more dramatic Marine operations of the total war.

Davis: It was epic, really. And there was one thing about the air support, too, that shows another aspect of the air operation. When we got our first series of bases in and were approaching the highest peaks down at the south end of the operation, it became apparent that there were enemy forces scattered around the area in small groups, to a degree that they would threaten our helicopters as we went up into those places. So we shifted gears. Instead of conducting assault operations up in there as we would have if there had not been this enemy threat to the helicopters, we actually climbed those mountains on foot.

The whole operation was done without a single helicopter being shot down that I know of. We lost one or two in the weather, but, I don't recall a single helicopter being shot down in Dewey Canyon because of the way Barrow and the battalion commanders and others were so careful in selecting their areas and helicopter routes--they just didn't endanger the helicopter force.

Q: In the tapes that you made, the interviews in Vietnam and the debriefing at FMFPac--by the way, at the debriefing at FMFPac, there ~~were~~ slides that you had prepared, you don't happen to have them, do you?

Davis: No, they must have been left there.

Q: In these tapes, you were very critical vis a vis the air support and we've gone into that.

Davis: The air support arrangements, as I recall, primarily.

Q: And the criticism was also directed at the quality of the machine that the pilots had.

Davis: And another thing that I'm still concerned about is the failure to recognize the need for a scouting capability, scout ships. This was an early argument that I had with aviation, the use of their Hueys in a scout role. You know, they had some restrictions on staying ^{above} / 500 feet and so forth and so on, and it was only after the Army pretty much proved the feasibility of scout operations at tree-top level that Marines started doing it. Not because pilots were afraid to, again, but because they had some restrictions on their air ^{which forced them to} operations / look over the ground at 500 feet.

Q: How about Marine air doctrine, per se, the old school solution, did you have any criticism of that? Did you think it was flexible enough to adopt to the situation and conditions in Vietnam or was it a whole new learning experience?

Davis: Well, I think the way we used them was a whole new learning experience because we said, "This is where the enemy is and therefore we are going there," instead of sitting down and looking around and saying, "Where can we go? Where is it easier to put the helicopters?" We never said that. We said, "We're going to put the helicopters ^{by} here/making what ever effort is required to prepare the place for the helicopters. We'll put in the explosives, we'll put in the engineers, we'll put in the chain saws, we'll put in the bulldozers. We'll put in whatever is necessary to make this a helicopter landing site, because that's where we are going to get at the enemy." That was all new to the aviators. ^{the}

New, too, was/idea of being totally flexible and responsive to the ground commander's needs. There's no sense in launching an expensive, dangerous operation after you find out in the night that the enemy ^{has} moved. If your patrols in there say that this guy's not on that hill anymore; he's over here! Call off that operation

and try to get over where he is and do it in before he moves again. a hurry/ It's this kind of rapidly changing situation-- high-mobility, flexibility--that I don't think anybody was ^{had} really prepared for. We thought about it, but we hadn't practiced it. We really hadn't done it.

Q: Again referring back to the tapes, you talked about Homer Dan Hill being up there and working out very well, and I noticed some petulance, criticism on your part that he was called back to headquarters, that you couldn't keep him up there. Who prevented...what was the situation which prevailed to prevent him from staying up there? His duties as Assistant

Wing Commander?

Davis: I frankly don't know. I don't know if it was the wing, the MAF, or who it was that made him go back down there.

Bearing on this problem was that later they finally got two Assistant Wing Commanders out there. The question in my mind was not what he was doing back there but the fact that I couldn't get along without him up in Quang Tri...

Q: A lack of perception perhaps on the part of III MAF?

Davis: Oh, absolutely! Somebody back there didn't appreciate the problem, and I don't know who it was.

Before we get too far from this scout ship thing, let's go back to it. To me the scout ship was like putting scouts out. You always had a few troops down the trail, looking to see where you're going and what is up there. You're risking those people to protect your force. All we were risking was the scout ship and pilot (I don't think the Army paid \$50 thousand for those little Hughes choppers) in order to scout a ridge for a company. He could hop over and take care of this ridge for this company; that ridge for that company. He could really move the operation along several times as fast as we could do it without him, but I could never sell this idea. The latest thing happened after I went back to Washington. When I was Assistant Commandant, Lou Metzger and I got busy with a one-man flying platform (called the STAMP Program) with Williams Research, and I'm still actively interested in that.

The money that we got going for it was diverted to a ducted-fan deal in Texas, either by the Marine Corps or by the Navy; it was but/an entirely different concept. As a result, we still don't have this little flying one-man platform. It is a jet engine that fits inside a platform and the pilot flies it by leaning one way or another. Very simple little gadget that can do the scouting. It could get inside the canopy and fly along a trail. When the Mayaguez situation was happening (they used those big helicopters for a long flight down there to put Marines into combat on the island) the Williams people and I were discussing our little project. It/ if the Marine Corps had gone along with the development/ as projected, we could have put three or four inside the fuselage of the big helicopter. As the tail/opens up scouts platforms, the four / hop out with these / go down and find out where the enemy is, or, more to the point in this operation, find out where he's not. We could have gotten those big helicopters in there safely, saving two helicopters and 40 Marines' lives.

That's all I'm saying--you don't go into places without your scouts out and this little gadget just totally excites me. We have the flying now, but not funded--an effective way for our scouts to become mobile.

Q: And you also were talking about the gun ships in the course of your interviews, fire suppressant type ships.

Davis: The gunship problem/ got resolved--the Marines went for

the Cobras and got / ^{good} gunships out there.

Q: I was going to ask you your reaction to General Greene's initial comment, his opposition to the use of the helicopter as a firing platform.

Davis: I've forgotten precisely what he said, but if, as I remember, his implication was that the helicopter gunship was not essential, that the tactical aircraft could do the same job, I don't think he based/ ^{his view} on a sound evaluation of what the gunship can do and what high performance aircraft can do.

Q: There has been some criticism to the effect that, here, the Marine Corps developed and established the concept of vertical envelopment, were exponents of the use of the helicopter, and this has been completely taken away by the Army with its AirCav (Mobile) Division. This is where, many people say, the Marine Corps should be. And I know that you've commented on this also. You seem favorably disposed toward the Air Cavalry...the greater need of/ ^{more} helicopters with the Marine division.

Davis: Well, I think the solution is in between. I thought that the Army had overdone it, because I've been in Army headquarters where helicopters are parked around so that it's just difficult to find a place to park them. Every staff officer has one. There's too many in the Army and not enough in the Marine Corps. I don't advocate going to the Army solution, but I think that it's detrimental to our capabilities and wasteful to our effectiveness and capability to not

let a battalion commander have a ^{frequent} look at his companies by helicopter. That's what I'm objecting to, that my battalion commanders and sometimes the regimental commanders and often the division G-3 and others just couldn't get out to where they should be. There was no way to get there except by helicopter and no helicopters ^{were} available.

Q: Despite the fact that the helicopter was adopted by the Marine Corps and that it's here to ~~stay~~, and, in the early days of the helicopter, some aviation people were against it, you are getting back now to the basic question of the role of the helicopter per se as a support weapon, and therefore who is to control it. It seems to me that we're going in a circle on this again.

Davis: Well, I was up in G-3 Headquarters years and years ago and I used to say from time to time that we should rename the helicopter and call it a truck. The problem at that time was, every helicopter that you put in the inventory was counted as an air frame and we were working against Pentagon people who were oriented towards numbers of air frames. So, if the Marine Corps was going to have 1500 air frames in the inventory, every time you put a helicopter in, you take out a fighter. This kind of a syndrome was detrimental to the effort and might still be. I don't know. One thing that appealed to me about the STAMP ^{at} vehicle was the fact that/Williams Research, the test pilots went out in the streets and recruited guys and sent them through a course that was one-third the length of the heli-

copter pilots' course. In one-third the training time they could fly this platform. So, if you were going to use them in recon, you could take recon ground troops, equip them with these flying platforms without letting it become another air frame in the total air frame control concept that they seemed to have in the Pentagon.

That was much of the reluctance of the aviators to go for more helicopters, because it cost them other air frames. It turns out that wouldn't have been better if we had called the helicopter a truck, because it's so much more complicated. I've found from flying with Army warrant officers as opposed to Marine lieutenants that it's better to have the better-trained Marine lieutenant who has an all-weather capability plus the TACAN and so forth. When you're paying \$250,000 for a helicopter (and in the early days we weren't thinking about that kind of price tag) it's worth having a well-trained man operate it; and so it's not like a truck.

Q: Well, also, it seems to me that...and I may be wrong on this, and this was part of the problem, the schism, the conflict between air and ground commanders we spoke about earlier, the role of aviation...

End, Side 1, Tape 2

Begin, Side 2, Tape 2

Q: ...the question of what the mission of aviation is in the Marine Corps? Is it an independent entity or is its primary function to support the ground forces, and if so, the role of the ground commander in these types of situations? Is there a fear on the part of aviation people that they may lose control of the helicopter?

Davis: Well, my basic infantry blood says that everybody's in support of the rifleman. You can start from there, but that doesn't apply to what we're concerned about here. I don't think that you can take a system as big and as complicated as the aviation weapons system is and have anybody responsible for it who hasn't been a part of it. Even a MAF commander, he's got to acknowledge the primacy of the expertise and the command ability of his air commander in running the air portion of his operation, and the ground commander in running his divisions and his brigades and his regiments, or whatever.

I don't think that it's necessary that we try to resolve with any precision this difference in defining support. The thing is, if the force has a mission (as/our mission in Vietnam) ^{in the case of} to destroy the enemy forces in the area, the only way we could get them destroyed was to have a helicopter haul us out there, and the airplanes come in and prepare the way and protect us and so forth. It had to be a mutual effort. When you get down to specific command relationships, the nut problem / ^{exists} (in my view, and as I saw it in Vietnam) at the time of commitment of the infantry forces

toward an objective (you have undoubtedly heard me say this on some of the tapes before) that the ground commander, in effect, loses command of his force once he turns it over to the helicopter force.

Under some of the arrangements out there, the helicopter force could put down, say, a first echelon into one area and then decide not to put the next echelon down there. Instead, to put them over here, because of risks involved.

So, he's in effect subjected the ground commander's initial elements to destruction and loss by failing to put in this necessary support. So, he's made a decision which could destroy the ground forces without any reference to the ground commander.

Q: Well, that happened.

Davis: Yes! So, what the aviator is saying is that he can't surrender command of his helicopters to the ground because he might get them shot down. On the other hand, he is willing to say, "I'll take control of infantry, even though I might get them killed." I think that we've got to resolve that. I think that you can't run an operation that complex without turning over the authority to somebody. You just can't have a split authority in/a situation.

My solution for those few minutes is put somebody on the scene with authority to say who's going to take what risk.

Q: Someone in an airborne command post?

Davis: Yes, somebody up there with the authority to say what they are going to do in these critical few minutes. I think that if we put our forces into a serious situation without having to face up to that decision, then we're going to unduly risk them to loss.

Q: I think that that happened several times on SLF operations.

Davis: Yes. What I had to worry about there was just a local commander, either a captain or a lieutenant who decided that he wasn't going to put his aircraft over there, he was going to put it over here. I just think that that is a real problem and we need in our doctrine to dissolve it; not just leave it dangling the way it's been.

Q: What was your perception of the SLF and the effectiveness or the lack of same in its operations?

Davis: As I recall, the SLF did not have enough helicopters for a full commitment, and the helicopters it did have were retained outside the pool of resources. It could be an ideal add on, because the ships could come up off shore and the unit could go out and be tactically involved and deployed without having to provide a lot more support. The support could come from the ship. They left most of their heavy equipment on the ship, and they could get in, do whatever it was directed to do, and get back out.

As I recall, it was not self-sufficient, because it really didn't have enough helicopter support with it to do these high-mobility operations very far from the ship.

Q: What about the necessity of maintaining a Marine amphibious presence in WesPac? Do you think that that was underlying reason for the SLF and why General Krulak supported the SLF so strongly?

Davis: I don't know how much of that was involved. I think that was an important point, and more important was the fact that we had such a capability. It was a capability that didn't exist anywhere else and there was a need for it up and down the coast. It should have been kept where it would be most effective up and down the coast, and continuously employed. I think it was, generally. We could have well had two battalions if we had had the ships. Two battalions afloat out there would have provided a great deal of flexibility as a reaction, responsive force.

So, I never/^{one time}thought in terms of not having an SLF or that I'd rather have the battalion ashore permanently.

Q: Well, there was that feeling, I think, on the part of General Cushman and III MAF that...

Davis: Not have it out there at all?

Q: ...and even on the part of Westmoreland--well, I think that Westmoreland's view, the MACV view was different, that General Cushman would much rather have those assets within III MAF instead of dividing the authority of its use with the Seventh Fleet commander.

Davis: Well, I don't know what his problem was with the Seventh Fleet. He may have had a different view of it, but from a general view of their capability and so forth, I support the idea that it ^{was} / a good use of resources.

Q: About Khe Sanh, what was your perception of Khe Sanh? Its importance or lack of to the overall MACV as well as I Corps situation?

Davis: I thought that in the early concept of going out there was the problem I mentioned before of our perception of the kind of war we were in and how to resolve it.

Early on, General Westmoreland

put a number of these out-of-the way installations way out in the country (and I was out to Khe Sanh/before the major reinforcement). There was nothing out there but a few advisors, local forces, and natives.

He had these scattered all up and down with an idea of maintaining contact with the people out there.

It might have been something that the Vietnamese government insisted on, that they maintain control over these remote areas. How

the situation at Khe Sanh

transformed into a four or five-battalion bastion, I don't know. I've never fully appreciated

it because my concept of defending an area against major inroads by North Vietnamese is to maintain a mobile force and destroy his force--not to set up a big defensive bastion. So,

I don't agree with the tactics of the situation, if that is what it was. Again, these are things that were decided before I got there. When I got there, things were changed.

On the other hand, the Tet Offensive was claimed to have had some effect on what happened to Quang Tri. Quang Tri might have been saved by Khe Sanh, because enemy forces that might have come into Quang Tri City were left/out instead in the mountains because of the bastion at Khe Sanh. Maybe that's true. If it is, maybe it was worth the effort. But as far as defending the area around Khe Sanh, I describe it in these terms. With the five battalions we were able to defend a postage stamp-sized area. Without the base there, I could effectively defend an area 100 or 200 times bigger with two battalions. So, that's the difference in my mind between a fixed installation where you've got to give the enemy all the courses of action and choices and flexibility around you/to protect yourself from him, as opposed to letting the enemy commit himself so you can go after him and destroy him with high mobility forces.

Q: What was your reaction to the McNamara Barrier and what was your involvement, if any, in its construction?

Davis: There again, the McNamara Barrier was a misconception of what the thing was all about in my view. It was a six billion dollar blunder.

Q: Six billion?

Davis: As I recall, that thing cost six billion. By the time they got it designed, major enemy forces were running back and forth across that area, so we were hooked with a thing that was supposed to tell us when two guys came through or 20 guys came through and, hell, we had hundreds of people running through there all the time. Another feature was these strong points from which, when the detection showed that somebody was coming through, we could run out and destroy him.

Well, as the enemy situation built up, we didn't change that concept. The only part of that concept we changed was that we just put more forces inside the strong points. We put 30 or 40 thousand mines around those places. I became aware of that when I was told one time to clean them up. There was no way to clean those things up without heavy losses. The concept was faulty from the start.

We salvaged some by efforts we made with the things developed for the McNamara Line. Some of the sensors. We were able to use those. We'd go out, our patrols would go out and find out where the enemy was working under the canopy and we'd put these precise sensors out and have a read-out so we could tell in the area where the enemy activity was. Some of the fortification materiel was used, also.

I wasn't in on the development of the concept that motivated them to expend all that effort and money. I think that it was a faulty concept.

Q: I understand that General Simpson's 1st Division was able to use a lot of the construction materials.

Davis: Oh yes, we did too. All our portable bunkers and everything...we took bunker material out of that supply dump, plus many of the sensors...but it was really a monstrous effort.

Q: How about the Korean Marines? Did you have...how would you assess their effectiveness? Did you have any relationship with them, involvement with them?

Davis: Just to go down and visit. The Koreans were, I think, seriously effected by an effort later in the war on the part of their government to reduce casualties. The field commanders were instructed not to have any casualties. Well, with that kind of a restriction Instead, ceased any kind of a bold, aggressive approach. / they controlled their area in a way we condemned our enemy for. I think (I don't have anything at hand so that I can prove it) but I think, from my conversations with them and looking at some of their operations and battle reports, the Koreans were operating a reprisal type of operation, where, if one of their soldiers got hurt in a village, the village paid for it and paid for it dearly. That part of it I don't like, but I think that this all came from what seemed to be a Korean directive not to have any casualties. With that, even though they kept their area secure, you couldn't use them to do/ other things that they could well have done to contribute to the whole effort. They were

pretty much put down, got their niche, stayed there, did it their way, absorbed more support than the results indicated.

Q: High priced non-effective mercenaries.

Davis: Yes. They took care of their area, but they had a capability to have done much more. I guess that that's the way to sum it up.

Q: How about any of the operations you mounted with the Vietnamese Marines? Did you have operations at all with them?

Davis: No, no. Very little. They were up in the area a couple of times, but they'd ~~only~~ came up in a reaction reserve force. After we got operating, we didn't have any need for them. We didn't have any stress after we had run off those enemy divisions.

Q: You were talking earlier about the ability of the North Vietnamese-Viet Cong to organize the ground, and it's been a pet theory of mine, I guess that it's no new discovery, that in World War II, as evinced in World War II and Korea and Vietnam the ability of the Asian to organize the ground, his knowledge of the terrain, his ability to just dig, his ability to fight at night, his ability to fight with a lesser logistics support base, fewer supplies...

Davis: Well, I think that's the kind of people they are. I think that they are brought up with this kind of existence at home. I've looked at reports on North Vietnam, where they've

tunnelled and dug, I mean that every hill and everything else was tunnelled out and dug out. I believe that this is a part of that governmental system of keeping them busy. If you keep them working hard, they think that they are getting something done, you can control them better. I wonder if the Russians are not doing some of that now, you know, they are supposedly preparing, according to the press, the Russians are going underground.

This tunnelling that's going on in the DMZ in Korea now. It's just an amazing amount of digging with just a small crew of three or four people, just digging a tunnel for a mile.

I think that they are good at it because they are forced to do it to survive, and where we had to dig in, like Khe Sanh and some of those hills around there, we had some pretty fancy, substantial digging done by Marines when the pressure was on them.

On some of those hilltops, we had Marine commanders who got themselves involved in building a perfect defense around a hilltop. They had cleared fields of fire and had covered holes with shooting slots, and so forth. It was amazing what they could do when they put their mind to it. You could hardly tell that a defensive position was there; yet they had 80 or 100 Marines along the area with good secure positions. It's an art we've lost, I guess, in large measure from World War I, when they lived in trenches for weeks.

Q: Well, that's all the prepared questions on Vietnam I have. Do you have any further comments? You said that you made some notes on the tapes...

Do you think that the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese were outstanding fighters? Did you pretty well demolish the myth

of these people as invincible jungle fighters who could slip silently through the rubber tree plantations, wearing only black pajamas and rubber tire sandals?

Davis: In Quang Tri Province we took this "giant" from 11 feet tall down to a midget. He just didn't exist when we finished with him. Again, because we soon learned how to apply our superior mobility, flexibility and fire power, and he had no way of defending himself, as hard as he tried for example, and as determined as he was. In fact/ there was some kind of radio intercept ^{from} / the 320th Division commander, where he was telling somebody that he had reassured his superiors if he were given one more try, he would show that his division could destroy us. So at least the division commander was serious about coming down there and trying to operate in South Vietnam, but he just couldn't hack it. Everywhere he looked, he had Marines on top of the hills coming down after his forces. ^{soon} They/ got scattered. He lost contact with them. He couldn't shoot his artillery, because he didn't know where his troops were, so on and so on, just totally unable to operate against our (not numerically superior forces) superior equipment, superior doctrine, superior fire power and mobility.

Q: In your FMFPac debrief, a transcript of which will be appended to the transcript of our overall interview, you give a pretty good review of lessons learned. I think that that was one of the III MAF interview tapes or the 3d Division interview tape, but in any case, are there any lessons to be

learned from the enemy, in a positive sense? Did the enemy have anything to teach us?

Davis: Well, this thing that we talked about, his ability as an individual, his ability to survive, to cope with the elements, and these kind of things, but I think that our people pretty much do that if they have to.

Q: Earlier you mentioned the competition between the units in the field to determine which could stay out the longest, and you also spoke of problems you had coping with what they called "foxhole strength, the manning level out there. General Tompkins told of how appalled he was at the tail, the administrative chain, that he found attached to the combat infantry division, the support elements that he had to contend with and which had nothing to do with the actual fighting. Did you find that situation still existing when you took over?

Davis: I talked to that in another way, that is, the helicopter needs to replace a lot of things, so that when I've got an artillery regiment with, say, two or three of its battalions utilizing helicopters almost full time, it's a serious drain on people trying to maintain three battalions' full complement of motor transport back somewhere in a dump. So, somewhere along the line we need to decide how much of this kind of tail we're going to maintain.

I talk about in my comments about more use of the sea concept and interestingly enough I was ^{recently} able to go down and spend two or three hours aboard the LHA at Pascagoula, Mississippi. I hadn't been aboard one of those before, but this

thing starts to give you the kind of capability that I foresee where we can support our operations from offshore instead of having all this stuff ashore. The economy of it was best illustrated to me in Vietnam at the time with a round of 105 ammunition. It was handled in dumps, out of dumps, on transport, and so on and so forth, seven different times in getting from the ship at Da Nang harbor to the gun position out in the hills, If we were supporting that from a ship offshore, it could have been handled one time--from the ship to the gun position. So, that adds up to a big tail, too; the same way with fuel for helicopters, and everything else. If we could do all this from sea...if we had a sea based backup--we could reduce a lot of the tail ashore.

Now, as far as waste of things over there, the fact that we have duplicate prime mover trucks and helicopters to do the same hauling of artillery needs to be looked at. The same way with the truck transport, shouldn't we reduce the number of transport trucks we have in some relation to the number of helicopter lift we add. Of course, the McNamara Line thing was in large measure wasted. We had a whole enormous dump of stuff we had to protect and inventory and take care of. That was a wasted effort.

I don't recall just having any units standing around not doing anything. If so, I would have put them to work. There was plenty to do. But the infantry numbers problem needs to be resolved, and I know how difficult it is. In Headquarters as G-1 I had to justify Marine Corps numbers to the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of Defense, the Congress, It's just hard

for them to accept the fact that it takes all these people in the pipeline to get one effective out the other end. And with a 12-month rotation, it / ^{was} just a pipeline that they could not swallow.

What they wanted to do was develop some kind of matrix where they could punch a button, and say, in all the situations in the world over the last 200 years, they had this many people in the pipeline; so, therefore, that's a valid figure.

At that level, they can't adjust to the realities, and they apparently didn't trust those of us who were working with the facts. But the facts are that we got our rifle companies down to a point where I was convinced that after a few hours of fighting, our casualties start multiplying because of the breakdown in organization. In other words, in a good organization where you've got mutually supporting fires and so forth, your casualties are minimal. When a guy gets up and moves, ^{if} he's got plenty of people covering him, he's going to get there. If he's got nobody covering him or half as many covering him, his chances of not getting there are multiplied, and that was the problem in the rifle company. Once you've got a rifle company down to 120, 140, 150 people, their casualty rate started up. That was the thing that concerned me. With the rifle companies out operating independently, they needed to be at full strength to protect themselves and keep their casualties down. But we never solved that problem. As I say, I recognized where the problem was, because I was back there with it before I went out to Vietnam.

Q: Are there any things specifically about Vietnam that we

didn't discuss that you would like to comment on? Things that we were not perceptive enough to ask you questions about?

Davis: One interesting thing developed in my thought processes during the last few years ^{which} / I was invited to the Army War College in '72 or '73 to talk about. Something that one of the faculty there had discussed with me somewhere, and he wanted me to come up and talk about it. The subject was those political decisions that lost the war for us in Vietnam. Being in Headquarters before I went to Vietnam and coming back to Headquarters, I had prepared a short analysis.

I'll just tick it off to see what interest there might be in it. The first thing that happened to us when we decided to go to Vietnam was the '65 augment for the budget, and the services turned in \$11 billion. A political decision was made, based on some advice from members of the Senate that it would never fly. You can't get \$11 billion, and if you do, it will cut in to the Great Society Program funding. You can't fund both at that rate. So we ended up with \$1.7 billion out of the \$11 billion, and it was announced(not publicly)

that the rest of it would be plowed ahead (in effect, concealed from the Senate) although I think that some key people in the Congress knew about it. So, as a result, we started to build up this unfunded effort in a way that we had to slow down the forces.

Another ploy, whereas

we could develop forces to a certain level and get them ready, MACV would then ask for them. This meant that the input of

the forces would spread over three and a half years.

Another key decision that made this necessary was how the Congress felt about calling up the reserve.

The Army had been directed to put this category of forces in its reserve, and when divisions were committed, they'd have time to get them out of reserve and get them behind division. Well, Harold K. Johnson, the Chief of Staff of the Army went over and asked for them. In effect he said, "I've got these divisions ready to go on this time schedule. Now I need this chunk and this chunk and this chunk and this chunk out of the reserves to go with these division." He was told, "No, we're not going over and ask the Congress for that, because we don't think that we'll get it, and so you'll have to go to the draft and build those units from scratch." They did, and as a result, in 1968, I got a brigade out of Fort Carson, three and half years, in September 1968, three and a half years after the war started. The last of the units to come out to Vietnam was the 1st Brigade of the 5th Mechanized, and it was assigned to Quang Tri Province. So, where the main force was ready to go in '65 and '66, it took 2½ more years to get them there because of a political decision not to call up the reserves.

Then there was the decision not to interfere with the build-up of the air bases in...air and missile bases in North Vietnam. It was a political decision to sit and watch them do this thing, and we did. As a result, we ended up with mountains in North Vietnam full of our airplanes with the pilots in the prisons. We were forced to sit / and watch them build up this gigantic defense system and did nothing about

it. Then the overall decision to provide sanctuary for the North Vietnamese, wherever he went, whether it was at home, in Laos, or in Cambodia.

As you recall, I got in trouble because some press guy quoted a private conversation of mine saying, "It made me sick to my stomach to sit on this hill and watch those 1,000 trucks go down those roads/ ⁱⁿ Laos, hauling ammunition down south to kill Americans with." I just couldn't believe that our policy could demand that of us, but it did.

Q: Did you get in trouble over that?

Davis: Yes, I got called down.

Q: By Westmoreland?

Davis: Just messages back and forth about how could this thing happen. Mr. Laird told me that it was nothing serious, to forget about it. But, I was really double-crossed by the young guy who wrote about it. He had been up there a number of times and we had had a lot of conversations and so one night after dinner he came over and supposedly off the record just wanted to talk about what the possibilities are, and among those things that I discussed and he was not supposed to write about was that, but he made a big issue about it and it hit the press pretty hard. But, that was a political decision. Mr. Sullivan over in Laos was the one who was so ticklish about the Laos situation and he made a big issue about little small ^{As} incursions and so forth. /a result, we gave those people total sanctuary. We could work ourselves in a rash about grinding them up and pushing them and shoving them, but they ran across the

sanctuary to rest and recuperate and get ready and come back again at a place and time of their choosing. We gave the initiative, in effect, to the enemy. It became a total "no-no" for anybody to even suggest the word "win" or "victory." I saw some of that where the press said, "Oh, that fellow wants to win! He's talking about a victory." There were one or two others of those critical political decisions that I somewhere in my notes addressed in my appearance up in the Army War College.

But, I think that the reason I think that this thing needs to be worked on, and an ideal man to work on it would be Wally Greene. I don't know what he's done with all his notes, but he's sat in on all these things and he's got it all written down in those notes of his. The American people, somehow and at sometime, need to know what caused the problem in Vietnam, and why we got in such a mess, and why we had such a disaster out there.

Q: Well, you've spoken about some of the problems. You were a serving officer and you were on active duty--you were told^{to go} and you went. This was national policy, that we would be involved in Vietnam.

Davis: I didn't go reluctantly at all. I went happily because I'd been out there and I knew many of the Vietnamese people, and I knew that they were going to be destroyed by the Communists.

I believed in what Mr. Kennedy said, that where liberty is threatened anywhere in the world, we've got an interest in it. So, I didn't go out there feeling that this was none of our

business.

Q: But a lot of senior military people, like General Shepherd, have made the point that we should never be involved in a war on the Asian mainland, that it would swallow us up. I think that MacArthur even said it at one point.

Davis: Yes, that's true, but this wasn't that at all. Again, the reason that it is important to expose the fact that our defeat in Vietnam was a political one and not a military one, because, as far as I'm concerned, my Marines in Quang Tri proved to me and proved to anybody who came to look that we could very easily destroy these forces and that he couldn't stand up to us at all. It was a one-sided, one-way affair and we were on top.

I challenged a man named Christopher (an editor for Time magazine) who came out and expressed to me in the strongest terms during a full day of visits around to these fire bases his total amazement at what we had done. He could not believe that this was totally contrary to what he had been led to believe and what he thought was going on.

I took him to all the villages where the people had gotten themselves organized and were rebuilding; they were working, they were totally devoted to their local government and their national government down there. I finally told Christopher, "Well, you could make a major contribution to our nation if you could somehow go back and convince your peers in the publishing industry that this is what's going on out here

instead of the reverse which I read in your pages every week, and you could turn this whole thing around. We could establish a free and independent South Vietnam here very quickly and very easily if we were permitted to do it." He said, "Oh, you expect too much of me."

Q: The South Vietnamese themselves and their attitudes are other factors.

Davis: There again, that factor is exaggerated. I participated in any number of these operations up there where the people who supported the South Vietnamese government most were those who had been under the suppression of the Communists, and that was a large portion of the population. They were totally horrified to think that they were going to be turned back over to the Communists.

It was not until after Tet that they finally decided to mobilize the countryside. Once they did that, I found support everywhere. for the government / I saw Thieu come up and visit some of the large villages where we had freed them and had their crops going, helped them rebuild their schools and gotten them back to a more normal life. He came up to help them celebrate their reactivation. When he got off the airplane, there seemed to be a little uncertainty; they had little flags and they went through the motions. But he went through the villages and talked to many people. When they left, it was obvious that he had totally convinced them and they recognized him as their saviour and their leader.

From my serious conversations with the Vietnamese that I trust around, this was generally true.

I don't think that they ever proved that Thieu had a big bank account in Switzerland or whatever, but they were big on his stealing and everything else. I don't know how honest or dishonest he was, but I think that he was effectively leading that country right up to day it ended. We shouldn't be the first to cast stones because we are^{not}/so lily white in these matters. Every mistake they made, every little mistake was just blown sky high in terms of the effect on what we were trying to do.

Q: I don't think that this will go down in history as one of the most popular wars.

Davis: I don't think that any war can be popular. It certainly wasn't in World War II, it wasn't popular to many people...the fanfare blew people into it. You certainly couldn't stay home in World War II, because everyone else was gone. You would be like a sore thumb.^{However,}/that didn't make it a popular war.

Q: Well, you had a more popular enemy to focus on. The same way in World War I, the issues were more clear cut for any number of reasons. Of course, Korea was...

Davis: I wonder if we could have survived in Korea (actually, we gave way at the end of the Korean War. We turned tail and ran, gave it away) but I wonder if we could have survived as far as we did if we had the television cameras taking the pictures that they wanted to take and putting them in our living rooms at home. The distorted pictures that they wanted

would have ruined us the way they did in Vietnam.

Q: I wonder how far World War II would have survived if they had had television cameras on the action at Tarawa or Iwo Jima. Again it's a matter of immediate perceptions as opposed to something that's built up.

Davis: Yes. Well, I told some of the news people out there that this is the first war where we had no censorship and it ruined us. (laughs) They totally failed, the news totally failed. They had some, I thought, some pretty astute observers out there in the early part of the war. Of course, you couldn't expect them to stay there, but many of the guys that turned up in the end just didn't have any concept of what it was they were looking at. They asked the most stupid questions about it. They just had no idea.

Q: Well, I think that we've just about exhausted Vietnam until we get to that part when we go chronologically...

Davis: Fine. Do you want to take a break for a while?

Q: I think so.

End, Side 2, Tape 2

Begin, Side 1, Tape 3

Q: Now we are going to plumb the depths of your memory, General, and begin that portion of the interview dealing with your career in depth, and going back to your very earliest days, and to begin with, I'd like to talk about the period before

you came into the Marine Corps. Now, you are a graduate of Georgia Tech, right?

Davis: Right.

Q: And that was the class of '38; you are a native of Atlanta?

Davis: Georgia. I was born in Fitzgerald and lived in Atlanta from the time I was a young lad.

Q: And you were one of the honor graduates of the ROTC at Georgia Tech. What made you opt for a commission in the Marine Corps? Could you have gone into the regular Army at that time?

Davis: No. The Army had what they called the Thompson Act, as I recall, where they would commission people for a five-year period with no assurance at all that you would continue in the Army. I obviously enjoyed my ROTC time; I had three years of it in high school and happened to win some kind of award. They gave me a medal, for drill performance. I went to Tech and signed up for the full four years' program in the Army infantry. They had the Navy unit there at that time, but I knew nothing about the Navy and didn't think about going into the Navy unit. I didn't know much about the military at all, in fact. None of my immediate family had served. I did have ancient relatives on both sides in the Civil War, but none of the immediate family had been in the service.

Q: Both sides in the Civil War?

Davis: Yes, one in Virginia and one from Indiana.

I did enjoy success in the ROTC and was very fond of some

instructors; I still keep track of one of my instructors, a Colonel Edmund Lilly over at Fayetteville who writes me a note now and then. He is quite old now. But he and others were a great inspiration to me in everyday life. I enjoyed and appreciated them so that they influenced my decision as the time came for graduation from Georgia Tech. I was a chemical engineer and had been awarded a teaching fellowship at the University of Tennessee to do some experimental work in elemental phosphorous. It had to do with the Muscle Shoals electrolysis of elemental phosphorous, and was to pay me a small fee and guarantee me a master's degree in 18 months.

I had accepted this, but just before graduation I got word from Knoxville that the money for this project had been cut back and that they could only pay me half as much. Well, what they had initially promised to me would be starvation wages, and half that much (this was at the end of the depression) led me to talk to the Army instructors about the possibility of going into the service. They offered me this Thompson Act, five-year program.

But a friendly lieutenant colonel told me that the Navy had a commission in the Marine Corps that was of a more permanent nature. I went down to inquire (Reed Fawell's father was the Navy captain in charge of Georgia Tech ROTC at the time) and to talk to Captain Fawell, who described the program. They did reviewing and interviewing of candidates, and I was selected as the Marine candidate from Georgia Tech from my class that year.

As I say to some of my family, I wasn't even sure of what it was that I was getting in to except that it had a great reputation and there had been a Marine or two around Georgia Tech at times. I caught a bus to go over to the Charleston Navy Yard for a physical exam, and somebody on the bus commented, as we went in the gate, about the Marine on the gate. That was the first time that I ever had a serious look at a Marine, when I was entering the gate at the Navy Yard to take my physical exam to become a second lieutenant.

Q: You went up to the Basic School at Philadelphia then.

Davis: Yes, at the foot of Broad Street. We got there in June. At that time we also had field training up at Indian-town Gap in the mountains, and went to Cape May to shoot the weapon.

Q: I have a muster roll listing of your class, and, beginning with the Class of '35, it was the biggest Basic class that had been in existence to that time, and out of that class we had two commandants and a number of generals, and out of your class, Roy Gulick made general, Russell Jordahl, who I interviewed...

Davis: They were instructors.

Q: But, you made general; Hugh Elwood; Lowell English; Hunter Hurst; Chick Quilter; Donn Robertson; and Alvin Sanders. That's a pretty good representation.

Davis: I think that it was 75 strong when we started.

Q: And, of course, there are some well-know names here as I look

down the list, Bill Benedict, who was purportedly a good infantry commander.

Davis: Interestingly enough, I ran into Bill Benedict not many years ago. He's involved in building that tremendous transportation system out in San Francisco.

Q: BART. Carter Berkeley was in your class, and there's old Gregory "Pappy" Boyington. What do you remember about him?

Davis: Yeah, Pappy. Well, I'll believe any tale anybody has about him. Pappy was a top character of all times as far as I was concerned. (laughs) And obviously a great flyer. I used to fly with him on some weekend / training flights. You know, we had six cadets there, and he was as good as they come. They had a few training planes there in the Navy Yard, and we'd fly up to New York for the weekend, and I'd always take Pappy for the pilot if I could, because he was obviously skilled.

Q: He was quite an athlete and a wrestler, too.

Davis: Yes. He was a great character, even in those days. I saw him last week.

Q: Oh, did he come to that Medal of Honor affair?

Davis: Yes, in Washington.

Q: How does he look?

Davis: Good, much better than I expected. You know, he spent years in an iron lung. Another point about Pappy, too. Two or

three weeks ago, I went down to Pensacola to visit my son and his wife and grandson--actually on the way over to Mississippi to help christen a ship. I went to the aviation museum/^{at}Pensacola, ^{prominent}and/among the displays that they have is one about the Navy aces. It was interesting to me to see that the top Marine ace of all times was Pappy Boyington. He shot down more than anybody. That hadn't occurred to me before this. I knew that he was right up there, but he is the number one ace.

Q: Was that counting the Japanese he shot down while a member of the Flying Tigers?

Davis: Oh yes, I think so.

Q: Tell me about the instructors. Now, you had a World War I hero who was the head of the Basic School at that time, Gilder Jackson. What was he like? Do you remember him at all?

Davis: I do remember him, but he wasn't really close to the students. He was more distant. I guess in those days it was tradition to keep yourself above the hue and cry of the common folk, but he impressed me that way--not really pompous, but he never got in there and mixed it up with the kids.

Q: How about Frank Goettge?

Davis: Outstanding fellow, you know, he was a great footballer and a hero in his own right, and he was the one that really got down and communicated with the new lieutenants on an eyeball-to-eyeball basis. I remember him very fondly.

Q: What about Howard "Red" Kenyon? I think that he was World War I also, wasn't he?

Davis: Yes. He was just an instructor, competent and very well liked.

Q: Let's see, who else did you have?

Davis: Don't miss Chesty Puller!

Q: No, I'm going to get to him. Let's see, there was James Brauer and Kenneth Chappell. Was that Dream Chappell? or Buddy Chappell?

Davis: Dream.

Q: And, of course, you had the two Creswell brothers.

Davis: Yes, but they weren't brothers.

Q: Oh, weren't they related?

Davis: No.

Q: I thought they were. Lenard, I guess, was the real rough one, wasn't he?

Davis: No, S.J.; I guess he's dead now, I won't say rough. S.J. was kind of a bull in a china closet. He was big and he was boisterous, and forceful. He was always pushing and shoving, and L.B. I thought was a more likeable, personable fellow, but S.J. was, well he was kind of outsize and his uniforms didn't fit very well. In fact, he was called "Sloppy Joe." By and large, though, we had competent instructors. I wouldn't say anything against

any of them.

Q: You also had Fromhold.

Davis: He was a fine instructor. I understand that he got in trouble later, though.

Q: Roy Gulick, Marcellus J. Howard.

Davis: I think Roy, isn't Roy down here in Albany somewhere?

Q: I think he is. His son is a lieutenant colonel on active duty.

And Russell Jordahl, I understand that he and his wife were very good with the new second lieutenants.

Davis: Yes, outstanding. He was. He really related to us in a fine way, and we thought the world of him.

Q: And of course, Lewie Puller.

Davis: Yes, Lewie, I guess, if you have to look back and see the road markers along the way that turns you in the right direction, you have to think of Lewie Puller. He was a great inspiration. Of all those that you've mentioned, I don't know of any other who had a course of instruction where the students would ask him to continue through the lunch hour, and he was just that kind of a guy. He would walk in, have his lesson plan-- I guess that they had to have a lesson plan to suit their superiors--but Captain Puller would put his lesson plan up on the lectern and pick up the cue stick that they used for a pointer. He would refer to about three words out of the lesson plan

and the rest of it was right down to the nitty-gritty of the wars that he had been in, the kind of things that make or break people, what's right and what's wrong.

As far as running a troop organization is concerned, particularly in the lower levels, I don't think that he had any peers.

Q: He was teaching tactics?

Davis: Yes, tactics. Primarily small wars. He was also our tactical instructor or whatever it was that ran the drill. He operated one of the two companies, and helped us get our uniforms. You had to pass the Puller inspection for your uniform and if there was any room in there to breathe, it was too loose! (laughs) One lieutenant came out and said one time that he had his uniform made down in Philadelphia, at Jacob Read's, and Puller told him, "You go down there and tell old man Jacob or old man Read or whoever in the hell is in charge that I said that that uniform is not going to pass," and this was his approach to most of our uniform problems. But he got us fitted out and in regulation attire, and taught us /great, great troop inspections and drill, and so on. He was a perfectionist in his way.

The thing I remember, too, about him was that he lived there in quarters in the Navy Yard, in a big house. Captain Puller and Mrs. Puller were as nice and gracious as could be. But if you had a dance or anything at the club, the real gentleman and ladies' man of the whole crowd was Lewie

Puller. He was a perfect host, dancer, conversationalist,
 of
 taking care/everybody, and gracious, and totally different
 character, a true Southern gentleman when he was required to be.

I ran into him many times. Later, he, I went to sea duty
 and he was in one of the nearby battleships--I was in
 a cruiser. During World War II, I had a
 special weapons unit and he had the 1st Marines, at the time we
 were loading up to go up to Cape Gloucester for the New Britain
 operation. My unit, being in support, had been attached out to
 the regiments for the voyage so I was personally/a stay-behind
 status. So I went to Colonel Puller (you walk
 in and he remembers you and says, "Hi old man. How are you? What
 can I do for you?" and I said, "I'm looking for a ride,")and
 explained my situation. All my units were up there and they were
 going to the war and there were a lot of things that needed to be
 taken care of--there were equipment problems and so forth--that I
 could contribute more to up there than I could back. He says,
 "Well, I'll tell you, old man. Anybody who wants to go to war,
 they can go as far as I'm concerned." He turned to an
 assistant and said, "You put Davis on the roster. We'll
 take him."

So that's how I got to Cape Gloucester. While we were up
 there (he was initially the exec of 1st Marines) he got command
 of the regiment and when he had a vacancy / a battalion
 commander and I asked him for that job and got it. I got
 transferred from special weapons, which, as you know, was anti-
 tank and antiaircraft, over to infantry through my personal re-
 lationship with General Puller and his acceptance of my desire
 to get involved with that part of the war.

Q: Do you have any comments about Basic School, per se? Was it a completely new environment and a new world as far as you were concerned?

Davis: Yes, but a great group of people obviously. You know, in that group you had one or two selected from every college and university in the country, 25 from the Naval Academy. At that time, the Naval Academy graduates going into the Marine Corps were the top ones who chose to come in. They've since done away with that. Now it's a slice proposition. But these were the top, top Naval Academy people and top people around the country, and ^{so it's just} obviously a fine group--enjoyable, smart, pleasant.

We certainly had enough to do. I had some advantage with my seven years of Army ROTC and much of the curriculum had to do with that kind of thing--infantry tactics, weapons, drill. Discipline wasn't all that tight. We had it pretty much free. The club was available. It wasn't anything like OCS is today where you are under test day and night, being checked out. No, I found it interesting and enjoyable. It served a purpose.

I went to sea from there, and certainly I was prepared in great detail to assume my details as a junior officer aboard a cruiser.

Q: Who was your commanding officer?

Davis: Initially it was Ray Crist and then Nelson Brown. Crist was there a short time and then Nelson K. Brown came aboard.

Q: Where were you? Out in the Pacific mostly on problems?

Davis: Yes, I joined on the west coast. The Portland was in Long Beach, and then we went to Hawaii.

Q: You participated in maneuvers, and so on?

Davis: Yes, we joined a fleet maneuver out in the far reaches of the Pacific and came back to Hawaii.

Q: Had any of your instruction at Basic School dealt with the new FMF? And amphibious doctrine?

Davis: Yes, it was just what you would give to a lieutenant, I guess. I don't remember specifically what we had at Basic School. I know that I went from the fleet back to the Base Defense Weapons School at Quantico, and it might be that some of the things I recall came out of that instead of Basic School.

Q: You were lucky that you...and you went to Ordnance School after that, but you were lucky you weren't opted for a defense battalion out of that Base Defense Weapons Course.

Davis: Some luck and some design. When you go to sea and live with the 5-inch guns and the AA battery and the Marines there for 15 months, you get interested in what you are doing.

Somebody inquired of me about going back to Base Defense Weapons. It was touted, you know, as antiaircraft and shore guns and that had some appeal, and I enjoyed the course. There was a lot of technical material, and I had a technical background. I worked then with mechanical computer type things, and so on. But as the course went on, we started doing these base defense problems.

stuck away way out in the Pacific and so forth. Again, in a conversation I had with Lewie Puller, and you can^{see}/that the ^{has} man/had a great influence on my career.

Lewie said, "Well, I'll tell you, old man. There is a billet down in the division at Guantanamo where they need an antiaircraft officer. I think that you would enjoy that." So I went in to old Colonel Deese, I think his name was, with an old handlebar moustache, the guy in charge, and told him forthrightly that I understood that there was a billet in the division in Cuba, and that's where I wanted to go. He said, "Well, you're the first one to ask for that." That's how I got out of the Base Defense Battalion and into the division. My first CO down there was Brute Krulak. Again, the Brute ^{on me,} has had a great influence /in watching him operate and getting to know his methods, and so forth. That was another contribution to my well-being as a Marine officer.

Q: What was going on down there at the time?

Davis: Well, I got there just in time to come home. You see, by the time we went ^{already} to the Ordnance School and got down there, they/had the first antiaircraft battery. It was equipped with .50 caliber machine guns and had just been organized. Brute was the CO. I was initially a platoon leader and then the exec. We were there a very brief time. On our troop ship going down there was an outbreak of a few cases of measles, so we got quarantined. The whole group got quarantined out in one of the regimental camps, while the regiment was out on maneuvers. Frenchy Lirette was the other

officer in this group. He was senior, so he was the commander and I was the worker for this/^{big}crowd of NCOs and others in a camp with absolutely nothing to do. To try to keep them busy, camped out on one of these coral fingers where they were dredging out around Guantanamo, we organized

a big party for digging latrines for the encampment. Somebody suggested, "Yes, when the regiment comes back they'd appreciate latrines." I'm not sure we did this voluntarily or were directed to do it, but it got to be a way to spend time during this quarantine for two weeks.

Then, an amusing event happened. We were in a battalion camp where the battalion commander was Bull Frisbie. He came back and had no more than entered the camp when some of the troops reported that some of the little boxes and shelves and niceties they had left in their tents were gone.

Frisbie got Lirette and he assembled the whole bunch of NCOs, stood us out in the sun for a while, and then he came up and bulldozed us right under saying, "I am going to give you 30 minutes to get/^{all}those things back into this camp." Well, we had no way of knowing what was missing or what was what, or anything. So, Frenchy released the NCOs and the next thing I know they were going in all directions including the area of Leroy Sims' battalion. They got everything in sight

and put it in Frisbie's camp and off we went. We didn't hear any more of that because immediately we got ordered to get back on ships to come back to the States.

I was with Krulak at Guantanamo Bay

for about just a very few days before we came back, first to Quantico and then down to New River. Bob Luckey took over and organized us into a full battalion of antitank, anti-aircraft, called the Special Weapons Battalion.

Q: He was the first battalion commander?

Davis: Yes.

Q: Frisbie comes up quite often as not too pleasant a character. I keep hearing about him on Guadalcanal. He evidently bulldozed quite a few people. He winds up with a regiment on Okinawa and in China.

Davis: I never did work directly with him. I know who he was and I bumped into him at times, and he certainly gave the appearance of being a rough,, tough character. But he seemed to get the job done as far as I could tell. This friend we are going to see in San Juan, Maxie Williams, worked for him as his S-3 one time, and he seemed to think he was a good commander.

Q: It all depends upon how you look at him, I guess.

Davis: Yes. If you are on his staff, you must be on his side.

Q: Of course, Bob Luckey was another personality.

Davis: The finest gentleman I've ever been involved with.

Brilliant. I really liked the man. A great sense of humor. Very competent.

Q: It wasn't too long before you started mounting out for the

'canal, then.

Davis: Yes, we went out in June.

Q: You were down in Lejeune, or New River, for quite a while.

Davis: Through the winter.

Q: Did you get involved with the winter maneuver up on Solomon's Island?

Davis: We went up below Norfolk somewhere there. I can't remember where.

Q: Camp Pendleton?

Davis: Yes, we went and joined up with some Army antiaircraft units. I was an umpire.

We went up there and lived in

some warm Army barracks. They were old barracks, but they were warm with good chow and everything. Writing our observer

and umpire reports was about all we got done. It was kind of a wasted time for us. We had (I'm trying to remember who it was in charge, Moriarity) Moriarity as the head umpire.

Q: Of course, there was a constant state of flux going on in the division at this time, with the formation of new organizations and the like, and cadreing units from existing units.

Davis: That's right. There was also that problem in command when General Torrey got rooted out and General Vandegrift took over.

Q: Were you aware of what was going on or was that at too high a level for you?

Davis: No, that was pretty high for me, a guy who after just three and a half years was just making first lieutenant.

Q: What about mounting out for the 'canal the following June, in '42?

Davis: We had no idea of where we were going.

We were just being

re-equipped with AA guns and apparently there was some concern about Japanese air power, but they decided at the last minute that we would keep all of our .50 calibers and take along a bunch of 20s and we received in crates from the factories in New Zealand some .40mms. So we went equipped with three/^{complete}sets of weapons for the AA. The half-tracks were just arriving. So, actually, in the process of just getting re-equipped, when it came to mounting out and we packed up everything.

Then we were told, "Where you are going you'll need every stick of lumber you can take," so then we made boxes out of old scrap lumber, and took boxes with nothing in the boxes but scrap lumber, and shipped all that. There was the train ride across the country and the troop ship out.

Q: You were also the division antiaircraft officer, which meant that you dealt with the 3 Section?

Davis: Yes, I was the staff officer and my primary contribution was in some planning. Of course, while at Camp Lejeune we had

the fright of the German dirigible that was supposed to come across the Atlantic and drop bombs on us. So we had to dig pits all around the encampment at Camp Lejeune, mount up all our machine guns and stand round the clock watches to shoot down this dirigible when it showed up.

Q: I had never heard that story.

Davis: You had never heard that?

Q: No.

Davis: I was just finishing the antiaircraft officer duties. In addition to that there were contributions to various plans and schemes and administration of antiaircraft training and the various training schedules. I ran a division antiaircraft school, where we had some airplanes pull target sleeves across Onslow Beach / while we fired all the truck drivers and everybody else with machine guns. They/took a shot at the sleeves so at least, when we went to war, they had had a shot at a sleeve.

Q: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked? Were you down at Lejeune?

Davis: Yes.

Q: What was the reaction in the division?

Davis: Oh, I guess everybody stayed up all night and listened to the news and thought about getting ready to go.

Q: You had made captain in February of '42.

Davis: Yes, that was shortly after Pearl Harbor. I had just made first lieutenant in November. And about once a year after that I got promoted.

Q: Working with the G-3 staff then, you probably got to know Twining, and Jerry Thomas.

Davis: Yes, they were there. Let's see, LeRoy Hunt was around heading one of the regiments. John Selden was there. Jim Murray was there.

I'm trying to remember who it was that I was working with directly on this antiaircraft thing.

Q: Buse was in there also. It was quite an all-star cast.

Davis: Yes, and Sammy Griffith was around there someplace and Wally Greene...

Q: Wally Greene was the chemical officer and Sam Griffith was the executive officer for Edson's 2/5.

Davis: And Buse came over to command the Scout Company with the motorcycles, and Hawthorne was our group commander. They grouped the special weapons, and the scouts, and so forth and maybe the engineers into a special troops unit with Hawthorne as the CO.

Q: Did you get to see much of Jerry Thomas?

Davis: Not a great deal, no, not at that time. I just knew who he was.

Later on, we got together more and more.

Q: ~~That~~ was quite a crew.

Davis: Yes, sure was. In the group, a man who had a great deal of influence on my life as a Marine, that I didn't know then, was Jim Masters. He had command of one of the battalions in the 1st Marines. I didn't know him there, but Jim is another one of those that I really came to appreciate and admire. He had a great capacity for taking a big problem or a division or whatever and just getting his arms around it and moving it into the direction he wants it to go. Some great lessons learned just from "sitting at his knee" from time to time.

Q: You went to New Zealand initially.

Davis: Yes, to Wellington, where we reloaded.

Q: That was on the Ericsson, which was a ship with a bad reputation, wasn't it?

Davis: Yes, that was the one where everybody got sick; it was a converted passenger liner or something like that. They weren't prepared for the load they put on it.

We had trouble with the food; the food was bad. There were inadequate head facilities, people were vomiting all over the ship. It ^{was} / a mess, as I recall, and it was a long voyage.

Q: There are a lot of stories told about the Ericsson. The Marines were ready to throw the crew overboard.

Davis: Yes, but I don't recall ~~that~~, but I do remember that

apparently gouging the troops.

Q: You were aboard that ship for a month. You embarked five days before it sailed and it arrived at Wellington on 11 July 1942, but you remained aboard six days before you debarked.

Davis: Well, what we were doing was reloading ship. We just lived aboard it while we were...

Q: Combat loading?

Davis: Yes. I got detailed as the transport quartermaster for our battalion to load the ship.

Q: Was this at Aotea Quay, where all the mess was? I think that Pate was the division quartermaster in overall charge of this.

Davis: I don't remember that, but I do remember it rained constantly and all the paper and everything on the dock got melted down and trampled over. It was just an awful mess. But we got mounted out. I had to get my unit spread throughout many ships and off we went to Guadalcanal.

Q: When you got on the 'canal, where did you stay? Up at division headquarters?

Davis: No, our mission really was around the airfield. We had farmed out some units, primarily antitank.

We also had a special weapons group

in the regimental headquarters of each regiment. It took

some of our people to man those. But our primary mission was around the airport with all these surplus weapons that we had. I guess, that's why we took them, to defend Henderson Field. So my CP was right at the upper end of the

airstrip. Going up the airstrip, we were just on the right, in the coconut grove. ^{We} caught all the overs from the battleships and cruisers that came in to shell the airfield.

Q: You had the 3d Defense Battalion in there, also.

Davis: Yes, they came in and assumed overall charge, so our weapons were responsive to that command. I've forgotten who he was, he was killed.

Q: The 3d Defense Battalion?

Davis: No, the local, the ^{officer} / who had the local AA, a lieutenant colonel; he was across the runway from me and ran the antiair there around the airfield. My AA was subject to his control.

Q: I don't recall who it was either. Did any of your guns shoot down any Japanese planes that you know of?

Davis: We claimed some. The Zeros would come around and every now and then they would just swoop down over the strip just to see what was going on. Two or three were shot down, and, of course, my guys all claimed them.

Q: Were you anywhere near the ridge at the time of the attack?

Davis: No, no. We were again right against the runway, on the

upper end away from the Lunga. What we caught was the bombing. You know, every day at noon those Bettys would come over and you could see the bomb bay doors open. We got so skilled at it that we could wait til the bomb bays opened and they reached a certain point in the sky before getting into a hole. Cliff Cates moved in his regimental headquarters just up the way across the runway and he had a little scheme going where if people didn't^{get} low enough in their hole during an air raid, he'd shoot at them with his pistol. He'd shoot his pistol,^{but}/I don't know if he shot at them or not. A few rounds came over my way and as soon as that stick of bombs went by, the dust was still up, I went tearing out across that runway to straighten out just who/^{ever the hell}it was that was shooting at me with their pistol. I ran headlong into Clifton B. Cates for the first time. (laughs)

Q: What did he say?

Davis: He told me exactly what was going on, and I said, "Aye, aye, sir." (laughs)/if I'd been in my hole, there would have been no chance of my getting shot.

Well, I guess the roughest part of that period of every day bombardment right down the air strip came when aviation brought all these bombs in. They had no place to store them, so they scattered them all around the airfield. It came my lot, as being the occupant of the airfield, to, after every bombing (they'd get grass fires going) to go down in there and put fires out. So I spent many a moment standing on top of a 500-pound bomb beating out

a fire around it. It's a good thing they weren't fused, but still it was a hairy way to spend an afternoon.

Q: Did you get to see or get to deal with General Vandegrift at all?

Davis: Just very remotely; for briefings now and then. I was still the division expert in a few things and I'd go down to a meeting, but this was very rare. Stan Fellers was the 4, and I'd see him now and then. Then again, by that time we were a battalion. Luckey was the battalion commander for a while before he moved to the artillery.

Dick Wallace
became the battalion commander.

Q: You took over the battalion in May. At this time, you were in Australia.

Davis: It went from Luckey to Wallace...
Yes, that's right. In Australia, the next year, I took over the battalion when Wallace left and kept it for a while until Hankins came and had it for a while. He went to the 1st
Regiment, and I took it back. / ^{Later} I went with the 1st Regiment, too.

Q: Did the battalion suffer greatly from malaria? Did you get it?

Davis: I think that everybody had malaria. I had both types. Tertiary, and something else. I had both types of malaria. I also

had a jaundice attack, so much so that I can't give blood to the blood bank even yet.

Q: Oh really? You weren't hospitalized at this time?

Davis: No, I had a friendly surgeon who kept me on my feet, and in my quarters more or less.

Q: How was it in Australia? Did you like it?

Davis: Yes. There was so much uncertainty. We went there with an idea that we were going to re-equip and retrain, and get back in the war in a matter of a few weeks. They pitched us out in Ballarat, out in the park with the 11th Marines, the tank battalion and special weapons. And so we really didn't settle down for anything like the long, long, long stay that we had. We ^{would have} / 5,000 Marines in the hospital and they got out in two weeks. ^{Then} / 5,000 would replace them, and by the time those got out, the first 5,000 were back in. They just didn't understand this malaria problem and as a result, all of the replacements that had been headed for the division had been directed elsewhere on the basis that we had our strength and as soon as we got these malaria patients out of the hospital, we would be ready to go again. But they just couldn't get the malaria out of their system and it prolonged our stay there on and on and on.

There was not too much in the way of training areas. We did have some forest out in the area where we could train some. Again, we really hadn't had any opportunity to get ourselves fully equipped in the special weapons. Up until then,

the big radars and things that were supposed to go with these 40mm automatic antiaircraft guns...

Q: What were these, Bofors or Oerlikons?

Davis: Both. An Oerlikon 20mm and a Bofors 40mm. The control mechanism for them was tied with some radars, big things that they didn't even send to Guadalcanal. They sent them to Australia finally. So we had the problem then of training. We had nobody trained. We had a couple of kids out of school who knew how to work the things so we went into a great effort at technical and other kind of training to try to get these complex weapons in hand. We wrote up a lot of SOPs and so forth which weren't really very satisfactory as far as General Krueger was concerned. He came down from the Sixth Army command to see if we were ready to go up and support his operations in Cape Gloucester.

He walked through the place with his staff and gave us some instructions on how the Army wrote their SOPs, as I recall. We did get some ^{good} training ⁱⁿ out/the bush.

Q: No firing though.

Davis: No. I don't recall any. I can't even recall a rifle range, although we did have a place to shoot small weapons.

Q: By the time the division left Australia, and you left in September '43, things were pretty well back in battery? With respect to the condition of the men, and so on?

Davis: Yes. Yes, we got back in shape. We were in good shape and passed all inspections with flying colors before we left. We mounted out in converted Liberty ships.

This was the first time that we had been in on one of these commercial loads where they went inside all the holds and filled up all the space in and around vehicles and then level it off. ^{Then} / put another layer and more vehicles to thus build up to the top of the ship. They didn't have any interior deck space or anything to put things on. So we buried our vehicles in the supplies, Commercial load it is called. And I was in charge of loading one of those ships, which kept me up 24 hours a day for a few days.

Q: No combat loading for Cape Gloucester?

Davis: No, you see, we stopped off at Goodenough Island to reload and then, between there and Milne Bay, the place where we mounted out for Gloucester.

Q: You went ashore...let's see. The division landed on the 26th of December, but you got off at Oro Bay.

Davis: I went to Goodenough for a while, and then over to Oro Bay. That's where I caught a ride with General Puller.

Q: Then you didn't get to Gloucester til January...no, I'm sorry. You landed on the 27th of December. Where did you stay all the time?

Davis: Well, we had sent along with the units a package of maintenance and supply and I just collected those up and built my CP around them. We started out initially just off the beach, moved up towards the airfield, and then moved back down to

where the LSTs went in. I had gone in on an LST.

Q: From pictures I've seen of Gloucester, the trees went right down to the water line. Did you have much trouble getting rid of the overhead and the mask for your guns?

Davis: We used the grass knolls around;

we had to hack out a little place along the beach where the
critical / ^{points} were. I don't think that we had more than a half
^{enemy}
a dozen/planes come over our operation.

As soon as you got in a little ways, there were grassy knolls
and it was easy shooting from ^{particularly} there/up around the airfield.

Q: Gloucester was sort of pro forma then for you; in your role as Special Weapons Battalion commander.

Davis: Right. I really didn't have a lot to do in terms of fighting. Mine was in supporting my units, keeping them supplied and equipped and inspecting them for administrative matters, and I established a CP and I had a little theater built for all the little local entities around so that they could have a place to see a movie. I've forgotten how long we were there. It seemed to stretch on and on. When did I join the 1st Marines?

Q: You joined the 1st Marines in April.

Davis: ^{was} So I / there from December to April in that role.

Q: And April 24th you took off for Pavuvu. What was it like to arrive at Pavuvu? I guess that it was quite a change from Gloucester.

Davis: Well, let's see. I don't recall that it was a heck of a

lot of difference, except that we had these rolled up tent camps and things like that. It was a little different kind of mud. (laughs)

Q: And rotting palm coconuts.

Davis: Yes. We made a mistake of building sidewalks out of coconuts and, of course, they not only rotted away but they gave away. We lined coconuts up down the company streets and put coral and mud over the top of that, which gave you a raised walkway to get out of the deep mud.

Q: Now what was the condition of the battalion when you took it over?

Davis: Good. I had Gene Hudgins as the exec, but he moved to one of the other battalions in the 1st Regiment and Nicolai Stevenson became the exec. We seemed to be in good shape. We had gone on some hikes and had equipment inspections and so forth. We seemed to be in good shape.

Q: Most of the men had been through two operations. Exactly what percentage of the battalion was this and has you gotten many replacements in?

Davis: I don't recall that figure at all...

End, Side 1, Tape 3

Begin, Side 2, Tape 3

Davis: Most of the key people had been there through Guadalcanal.

Q: And immediately started training for Peleliu.

Davis: Yes, and that was good training in that there was an area where you could assault four or five positions with total freedom of action. You could employ mortars with live ammunition plus rockets and your flame throwers in assault teams. It was the best assault team training that I witnessed and totally realistic. It was dangerous, but we were going into a pretty dangerous situation.

Q: These were different tactics from those which were used prior to Guadalcanal or Gloucester.

Davis: Yes, that's right.

Q: Apparently some documents had been captured to give an indication of what might be faced at Peleliu.

Davis: Yes, the heavy fortifications were a prime concern in our training, and we developed these highly skilled and finely tuned assault teams.

Q: The men with the satchel charges and the flame throwers.

Davis: It was realistic and hairy, I'll say, to watch them go about it, but the small unit commanders knew that the lives of men were at stake and they really went at it during training to get ready for this kind of assault. So much so that when we got a new batch of people from out of the States (among them was Jack Warren, who took my battalion--I

was still a major at the time) and I took Jack down to show him this (he had come out of the training areas in Quantico you know with limits due to safety and so forth)

he was pretty horrified to see what was going on in this training area. He recognized right away what it was and why, but he just couldn't believe that we'd turn an assault team loose and let them go at a bunker with no holds barred.

Q: Do you remember off hand who were the company commanders you had?

Davis: I remember C Company was Pope, who won the Medal of Honor subsequently. He's a banker in Boston. Jennings had A Company. Dawes has B Company. Renier had the machine guns.

Q: You relieved Warner in August.

Davis: Yes. Warner got in trouble. He came in while we were mounting out, and he got lost somewhere over in the ^{other} islands. He went over and said that he couldn't get back. Puller met him at the door to tell him he was relieved when he got back.

Q: Where did he go? Elsewhere in the division?

Davis: I don't know.

Q: So you got the battalion back.

Davis: Yes.

Q: And who wound up as your exec?

Davis: Nicolai Stevenson.

Q: Who had been your exec?

Davis: Yes. I'm trying to remember now. He had been the 3. He had moved down to the 3 and I was trying to remember who the 3 was before, but I can't remember the details of the command changes at that time.

Q: Now 2/1 landed at the extreme right flank of the division.

Davis: Yes, as I recall.

Q: Because Hunt had Company E and I guess that he was on the extreme left flank. Did all three battalions go ashore at the same time?

Davis: No. I went ashore in the trace of one of the battalions, I think within 30 or 40 minutes after the...

Q: Your orders were to go right across the airfield.

Davis: I don't remember that. I think that we went in and turned north.

Q: So you went right into the ridges.

Davis: Yes, but the lead elements were bogged down right on the beach, and it became a new ballgame immediately after we got ashore. That first ridge was still full of Japanese.

Q: You got wounded on D Day.

Davis: Yes, a mortar rounded splashed nearby and ran a long sliver into my knee. Fortunately/not a critical wound. It bled a

lot, but they got it out and doctored me up.

Q: Well, it was pretty hairy all the way through.

Davis: Yes. That was a place to lay low. I was always convinced that Lewie Puller would not have survived had he not been crippled. You know, his old wound from Guadalcanal flared up and got him down where he couldn't walk. They were carrying him around on a stretcher. I was convinced that if he had been able to walk around the way he was prone to do, he was going to be killed. You know that Joe Hankins got killed from overexposing himself.

Q: Yes. He went around...there was a sniper near the road on the shore and he was an old team shot and he thought...he was the provost marshal, and he thought that he would go out get that sniper, but he got hit first.

For your services as battalion commander, you were awarded the Navy Cross for that operation, specifically for the night of September 17th, when the units got all fouled up.

Davis: Yes,
first I went up to join in with Hunt to get him reestablished inside of the family and then there was a maneuver--this is when the battalions got all mixed up. We had companies interlaced in between one another in a way that they had to do some sorting out, and the sorting out was to take place in the early morning. I don't remember the date, but it must have been the morning of the 17th, and we jumped off very early. So we spent the night pretty much getting the companies sorted out. In spite of that we got off in good order and went across the edge of the airfield, heading north now, tending north. We were

going up generally astride that road that went up north on
ridge. We
the near side of the/went some 200 or 300 yards up there and
ran into the beginnings of a fortified area that they didn't
clear up for six months after we left.

We got right into the heart of it, but we couldn't move
without getting shot at from two or three directions.

Q: It was unbelievable. I don't think that anyone who hasn't
been there can even depict what it was like.

I think that the 1st Marines sustained something like
65% casualties on Peleliu...

Davis: Oh, it was terrible!

Q: ...and I remember coming back to Pavuvu, I hadn't heard
of Puller before then, but had some friends in the outfit,
and he was called all sorts of names. They called him a butcher,
and highly critical of him. Of course, what does a private or
a corporal know? But, there were some pretty high feelings
against him at that time.

Davis: I don't know if that's just the normal reaction when
you really get hurt or not, nor do I know what he did
to earn that reputation. He was, as I say, crippled. He was
confined to a stretcher.

Q: Really? The other thing was, the other comment was that
his perspective may have been off. His brother, Sam, had been
killed a short time before Peleliu during the Guam operation.

Davis: Oh, he was bitter against the Japanese. There was no question about that. Terribly bitter. Because of his brother.

Q: You went back to Pavuvu about the second week of October.

Davis: You see, after that first move up north, everything just totally bogged down. Casualties were just unbelievable, so they pulled us out and moved us around to relieve Gordon Gayle in the islands on the other side of the island.

Q: Let's see, it was the 1st of October when you boarded the ship and got back to Pavuvu on the 9th.

You mentioned Jerry Thomas...I guess that he'd come out on a trip?

Davis: He came out on one of his inspection trips. He greeted me, "Ray, I didn't know that you were back out here," and I said, "I'm still here." I was one of those that went out and stayed out, at least that long, something over 2½ years.

Q: Did he take you back home with him?

Davis: (laughs) No, he didn't.

Q: Had you been on orders to go home yet?

Davis: No, I didn't have any orders. I didn't know I was going home until after the Palau operation. We got back to Pavuvu and Jim Murray came out in a draft of lieutenant colonels and took command of my battalion and I got orders home.

Q: Did you fly back?

Davis: As I recall, yes.

Q: No, no, you sailed back.

Davis: That's right. We came back on the Billy Mitchell, with Chaisson and others. It turned out to be a very eventful trip in that a day or two before we sailed the division officers' mess had received an enormous ration of whiskey for everybody. Since all the officers who were going had put in for their share and had it, they carried it on board with them. They had one big stateroom down there just full of officers who spent much of their time playing cards and getting rid of their booze rations.

I turned out to be CO of troops for the trip, and it was an amazing collection. They had been by India and picked up some missionaries and students and a bunch of Army troops. It was a hodge-podge of people. It was run by an Army Transportation officer and they were operating under Army rules. It generated some interesting problems. Captain Coyle, Coast Guard, was the skipper and he had a Navy reserve commander as his exec, and this Army Transport fellow --I've forgotten his title--had set up strange For example, some/rules. / for every meal in the mess, a field officer would be in charge of each mess line.

Well, that was totally un-Marine like and I just told him that that wouldn't happen. It would be an embarrassment to my Marines to have a field officer standing around watching them eat when they were accustomed to having a sergeant in charge of the mess line. He exercised himself considerably and went

to the exec and got him to agree with him. I got Captain Coyle to instruct them that we'd act like Marines on that ship.

I got my officers together to ensure that nothing would happen down there that could prove him right. They made visits down there initially and got good NCOs in charge. ^{We} got all organized so there was never any trouble, although we never had anybody above the rank of buck sergeant in Army field officers' jobs down there.

Q: Before you left Pavuvu, had you known that you had been put in for the Navy Cross?

Davis: Yes, Puller told me that. More on the trip: We had a very similar thing concerned with the troop living spaces, where the Army officers down in there for certain hours of the day just to stand watch. Again, we had it out, convinced them that we would do it the Marine Corps way, and it worked. Of course, the first time that the captain had an inspection I had the officers and NCOs together to be sure they understood how Marines were supposed to prepare for inspection and ^{that} it had better be that way, and they did. They cleaned the ship up and put on a fine performance. That told me something about the way that the Army tries to run things. I guess that the Army must have had a lot of trouble on those voyages where they felt obliged to put field officers on watch.

Q: When you left the division, did you know where you were

going?

Davis: I don't recall.

Q: Where was your family at this time?

Davis: They were in North Carolina. My wife's people lived near Charlotte and they were in that area. She had produced my first son while I was away and he was 21 months old before I saw him.

Q: Oh really? What was your homecoming like?

Davis: Oh fine. He was a very bright little boy. Of course, he objected to my first night in the bedroom because he'd been displaced a little bit. He cut up a little.

Come to think of it, they were here in Georgia when I first got back, and had been in North Carolina most of the time I had been gone. I came directly to Atlanta from the west coast.

Q: Did you fly from the coast?

Davis: No, I came by train.

Q: Was it a troop train?

Davis: No, it was a regular train, but they had troop cars and they had MPs on there, as I recall. I guess that that was standard on passenger trains, to have MPs on there to manage the military people.

Q: Then you went up to Quantico to be Tactical Inspector at the Schools.

Davis: Yes.

Q: Whom did you work for?

Davis: Jimmy Kerr. Is he still alive? He was about to die some years ago.

Q: He was an old friend of "Bigfoot" Brown's. I don't know if he is still alive. I take it that he was a character cut out of the "Bigfoot" Brown mold.

Davis: Yes, yes, pretty much, pretty much. (laughs) That was a fairly short tour before I went over to the Air-Infantry School with Pottinger.

Q: Then you became chief of the Infantry Section.

Davis: Yes.

Q: What schools were going on? Were they still turning out the OCs and the ROCs? Or was this for Field Officers School?

Davis: No, it was just being changed to kind of a Junior School level, primarily captains and majors. The unhappy people in the AIS were young pilots who considered that they had been to the war and had gotten so glued to the flying business that they felt, with their life in jeopardy, they should never get away from the controls on an airplane for more than a few hours at a time. / Otherwise they'd lose some of their skill and their reactions. So they just hammered this all the time, that being there in that school was just taking them away from their need, and that was to fly airplanes. They wanted to get out of there and fly airplanes.

Q: Did you get them straightened out?

Davis: Well, they didn't have any choice. The school was run by an aviator...

Q: Was Pottinger an aviator?

Davis: Pottinger was an aviator, and / ^{my} Basic School classmate, Jim Embry, was the aviation subjects instructor. We hit it off fine. It was a period of transition when, in the mid-stream, they were changing from the old basic level of instruction...new classes were coming on board and overlapped in such a way that you couldn't stop and revise the instruction. You had to just change according to the time as you went along, and that was what was happening.

We had some difficulties where some of the classes didn't get changed in time for the transition between courses, but it all soon straightened out.

Q: You stayed there until '47. The course changed in '46 from what it had been to Amphibious Warfare School, Junior Course; I guess that was the transition.

Davis: No, the transition I was discussing was the one when I first went there, when we had previously been an AGOS or something.

Q: Marine Air-Infantry School.

Davis: That was the title they had just assumed when I arrived. Before that, it had been a very basic level instruction, a very basic level. We had upgraded it, and then later it had gone to the Junior School. I had forgotten the dates of those changes.

Q: Wasn't this a pretty quick turnaround, in less than two years back and overseas again? Was this an accompanied tour? To Guam.

Davis: It was so designed. My wife came out, I guess a year after I did. At that time I was in General Craig's brigade and having to build our own quarters and so forth. As soon as you had your house ready, you could have your wife come out.

Q: You had to build your own quarters?

Davis: Yes. They issued you a vacant lot and a knocked down Quonset and you had to order some things from the States, like we ordered a commode and such essentials like that.

Q: Who hooked up the plumbing and so on?

Davis: It was kind of do-it-yourself. I was a plumber in fact. I put plumbing in four or five houses and somebody else was an electrician, and Donald J. Robinson, the old tanker, he could do fancy carpentry and cabinet making and woodwork. He did a number of those houses. So it was kind of a trade-off effect.

Q: It sounds like the old days at Quantico.

Davis: Yes. It was one of those things that we get into at times. I understand that some of the same thing has happened recently where there's a question of whether the funds expended are coming out of administrative channels or fleet channels. This was supposed to be an FMF, Fleet base, and there seemed to be some people convinced that it had to come out of fleet money to build this base. There was opposition to this and it was argued that it had to come out of the Marine Corps administrative funds, and they never could settle that, apparently. So General Craig's reaction to that was, "Well, we're here and

we've got to live, so we'll just do what we can. We'll just commit our people, and troops and resources to get ourselves out of the mud the best way we can while the bureaucrats are hacking and determine this thing out / who's going to do what," and it turned out after a year that the Marine Corps would finance it out of base funds. They started building a permanent base out there after I'd left. ^{was in} Liversedge/command when a typhoon blew the whole thing down and they went off and left (I guess they're still there) the foundations and first floors of concrete buildings stuck around in the jungle. It never got finished.

Q: To go back to Quantico for a minute, who had the base and the Schools at that time? General Cates?

Davis: Yes, Cates, and Pollock was his chief.

Q: I think that Twining was back there too, or he may have been in the hospital at this time.

Davis: I'm trying to remember who was running the Schools. I don't know who was running the Schools. Jones?

Q: Louie Jones?

Davis: Louie Jones. I can't remember. I was trying to remember the Ed Center. Hogaboom was running the Senior School and Krulak was his deputy. Jack Colley was there, I guess Jack Colley was the deputy and Krulak was the number 3 man.

Q: Of course, Krulak and Hogaboom go back together to old China days. They were out there in the 4th Marines at the same time.

What was the mission of the brigade out at Guam at this time?

Davis: It was, it just had contingency plans to go to China, and it finally did; it sent a battalion out to China. T.B. Hughes, I guess, took the battalion.

Q: What was your function out there?

Davis: At the brigade?

Q: Yes sir.

Davis: Well, when I arrived, I was the G-3, but that was just interim until Lew Walt came. Then Sneeringer, who was the 4, came home and I took over the G-4. My G-4 function came to be finally concern over getting the facilities built and in order, although Morgenthau was the engineer in charge of the building construction program.

Louis Plain was the head hanzo of construction, but Morgenthau was the key worker in that. Then, the next major problem became one of roll-up of the 5th Service Depot.

During the war they had the jungle full of supplies. They didn't even know what they had, and didn't have an adequate staff to find out what they had. Further, after an inventory of a square block of canvas they'd

start issuing canvas. It was all rotted. The same way in the lumber yard. They'd issue lumber and in the middle of the pile of lumber it would be all rotted. It was just difficult finding the good from the bad. So it/^{was} decided to have a wall to wall or a block to block inventory, and use troop labor to do it.

Well, General Craig wasn't about to assign his tactical troops down there willy-nilly to work for a depot, so he organized them into a task force and I was assigned to take care that this whole thing was done in a task force orderly manner. The troops were being totally responsive to General Craig in support of the 5th Service Depot. If they had a lot to clean up, they'd get an op order to clean up the lot, under General Craig and not/^{be} assigned to Thompson, who was commander of the depot under Dave Shoup's logistics outfit in Hawaii.

So that was an interesting session--treading water between General Craig and Colonel Thompson to get the work done without treading on anybody's toes. (laughs)

General Craig was great. He's another one of those that, if you have to emulate a man in your approach to life and your aspirations, he's another one of such people. I guess if any great fortune came my way, it was because of opportunity time and time again to serve with people like that--those like Craig, Masters,

Nickerson, Litzenburg, Walt, and others.

Q: When did you serve with Nickerson?

Davis: He was Director of the Senior School and I was his deputy there. More important than that, he relieved Litzenberg as commander of the 7th Marines, and I had several months of overlap as his exec of the 7th Marines in Korea. That was my first acquaintance with him.

Q: Getting back to the brigade and that inventory. Did they find much usable stuff?

Davis: No. We had to write it off by the ton and by the yard. So much of it was totally surplus to our needs and it would have been much better if we had turned the whole thing over to a contractor or something to let him take away what he wanted and bury the rest. But, the effort didn't last long. I guess about '48 or so, they brought the whole thing back to the States.

Q: Now, you came under FMFPac at that time.

Davis: Yes.

Q: I think that Watson had FMFPac, did he not?

Davis: Yes.

Q: Did he make many visits out there?

Davis: No, I think maybe he came out a couple of times.

Q: You were pretty much on your own out there.

Davis: Yes. I'm trying to remember the visits. We were so absorbed in the problem of just living in the mud, you know, with no support. Nobody wanted to do anything for us, but General Craig was determined to not let his troops suffer.

We ran some maneuvers. We did some airborne/airlift flights over to Saipan and Tinian. We had a big maneuver area on Guam itself with a firing area there.

Q: Were there Japanese still giving up?

Davis: Yes, there were two or three while I was there.

Q: That must have been interesting.

Davis: Well, I didn't see any of them. I guess that they'd turn up and somebody'd pick them up and haul them off.

Q: You had some of the war criminals incarcerated out there. Let's see, who had the barracks on Guam at this time? Waite Worden...

Davis: I've forgotten who it was.

Q: ...and there were some executions of Japanese war criminals conducted there. But I guess that this was aside from the brigade. You had nothing to do with that.

Davis: I don't remember that happening while we were there.

Q: You left there in April '49 to become an I-I. That must have been...in Chicago. That must have been an entirely different experience.

Davis: Yes, on a very personal basis, having my two boys just starting school when we got back. They had been out in Guam all this time where you don't require any clothing except a pair of shorts, you know. I went on to Chicago and we purchased a little house out in Deerfield, just north of Chicago. The family arrived and I was not aware that the school started almost the day they arrived. We sent these boys to school in Guam clothes and the teacher sent a note home that the weather just wasn't appropriate for his attire. (laughs) We took him shopping and got him dressed properly, and it did turn chilly all of a sudden. It had been as hot as Hades when we arrived, but the first day that school started it turned chilly and we didn't have anything that was fitting.

Q: Did you have to organize that reserve unit?

Davis: No, it was there. Jim Taul had been the I-I and an old fellow died recently, John Bathum was the battalion commander. He'd been around Chicago all his life and (back in 1921) he was a PFC in the outfit and had to buy his own shoes, etc.

I heard those tales from Bathum. I was very fond of Bathum and he was totally oriented towards the welfare of the outfit, the Marines, and was a fine Marine himself.

We had a good unit. We did a lot of work to upgrade the participation of the reservists. Interestingly enough, there was a reservist there on extended active duty working in the I-I office as my assistant.

Roy Whitlock, then a first lieutenant, is now over here in Augusta, Georgia running the Junior ROTC.

I get over to see him frequently. I commissioned his unit six or seven years ago. In those seven years it has been either number one, two, or three in the nation as far this MCROA award is concerned. It got first place this year. It's the only unit in the country with that kind of record and it's truly outstanding. It went into a high school that was having problems and it straightened out the whole school system over there. Everybody leaned on Roy Whitlock. Now, I bring him up because, in those days in Chicago, I came to know Whitlock as the fellow who could do anything and could get anything done. He went out and recruited an entire high school football team into the Reserves, which caused a lot of anguish when the war started. He mentioned one day that we needed to have a band. We weren't really authorized to have a band, but we got permission to have a band, so he recruited a high school band, the entire band, except the conductor. He couldn't get the conductor to sign up, so I insisted that Roy had^{to}/really get busy now. We had a band. You've got to have somebody to conduct them. He invited me down to practice--they practiced on Wednesday nights after we recruited them--and Whitlock was directing the band. He could do that! He ran a big, mammoth choral program on the west coast one time. He is just a remarkable fellow and his style and leadership show up in a place like that high school over in Augusta.

Q: Of course you had others...Al Thomas, I think, came from

Chicago.

Davis: Yes, Thomas came from Chicago.

Q: And Jim Donaghue.

Davis: Donaghue is a long time friend. And Sengewald up in Cincinnati. Kennedy was one of the company commanders. He has since made brigadier, Verne Kennedy. Brigadier in the reserve. And our public relations ^{officer} / was Jim Hurlbut, you know the guy who did the zoo bit on TV.

Q: He came on active duty during Vietnam. You had quite a crew up there.

Davis: Oh, absolutely, and we organized a woman's unit, organized our own recruit training platoon. Anybody who wanted to join the outfit, he had to come down for recruit training for a while, a few extra hours. We took ^{the} /battalion off to summer camp just about the time the Korean War started.

Q: You were out at Pendleton when the war broke out.

Davis: No, we were at Lejeune. We went down to Lejeune.

And here's another one of those breaks where I got involved with the right people.

Litzenberg was involved with reserve training at Camp Lejeune. Having come there from the brigade and Quantico experience, I was determined to get this battalion staff work properly done before we went to Camp Lejeune. We had a lot of extra sessions with officers and so forth, and had an elaborate set of plans and orders drawn up for the

movement to Camp Lejeune. On the train enroute, we wired up the cars and ran a CPX with the field telephone and everything on the train. All these / ^{plans and} information preceded us to Camp Lejeune. When we arrived, of course, Litzenberg was relating how happy everybody was at our effort.

Bathum, who knew Litzenberg from years in the past, gave full credit for the whole effort to me personally. Of course, it wasn't all mine at all; Bathum had a great part in it. But when we got back and were getting ready to mount out, Litzenberg flew with parts of his regiment over to Pendleton to get organized to go. When the 6th Marines changed to the 7th Marines, he needed a battalion commander and through this relationship between Bathum and Litzenberg at Camp Lejeune, he asked that I come out to take that battalion to Korea. Without that, I might have been left out of the war somewhere.

And Litzenberg was another masterful tactician. He had a better feel for going and getting the enemy than most people I've been around. He really got a lot out of that regiment.

Q: Was there much aggravation in mounting out the battalion for Korea?

Davis: No. We had the standard problem of ^{some} people who wanted to stay home. We had to set up a hearing process. The most serious problem I had and the most amusing in some ways, we were having an enormous number of physical failures when they came down to get the physical, and these all somehow had a relation to the guys' mental attitudes. I forgot how the doctors were expressing it, but they were finding all

all these people unqualified to go. I looked over a lot of them and I knew some of them, and I couldn't believe the findings. The two doctors worked out at Hines VA Hospital, full-time, and the next thing I knew, the doctors' reports came in and they weren't qualified to go either. And it turned out that they had examined one another and found one another not qualified to go. With that (laughs), I took all these unqualified people, got me another doctor, had him examine them, and they were all qualified to go. We got rid of those two doctors. It worked much better.

The other problem was people who didn't want to go right then or didn't want to go at all. So we had several days of sessions for these people to come in and have a hearing to see what kind of criteria they met. But we put 700 on the train to go and didn't lose more than maybe a 100, and most of those were just delays to finish school.

And that's when we got in trouble with a football team. I finally went along with the solution ^{after} / the principal and the school superintendent came to see me and said that there was too much at stake to let this team go. So they worked out some arrangement whereby they would meet the criteria. They could graduate within a certain time frame which met the requirement for deferment. So, they got the whole team deferred after I made them sign the papers that they were going to carry out the rules. Those were some interesting times.

Q: This was getting the Chicago 9th Battalion on the train.

Davis: Yes.

Q: That was before you went out to join the 1st Battalion, 7th.

Davis: Yes, we saw the battalion off on a train and I flew out to join the 7th Marines.

Q: Did any of these people join your outfit?

Davis: Yes, in fact, Sengewald was a principal. The organization of that reserve reception out there was just beyond belief. As Bathum related it to me, he got off the train with his battalion, well organized, officers, NCOs, everybody; all their records, weapons, everything, all ready to go. They had just fired their weapons and had an outstanding qualification at Camp Lejeune.

Everything ready to go. They got there in the dark, they offloaded the train (this is a tale that's been told many times, I've seen it in print) counted them/ⁱⁿ groups of 75, assigned somebody in charge of them, and walked them off in the dark, and as Banthum said, "I saw them walk off in the dark, I've never seen them since." They disrupted the organization. They took all the records, all the equipment, all the weapons out in the field and put them under a canvas and then farmed these people out all over the place. When it came time to form the new units,

we were under a new table of organization. We had to add a rifle company to each battalion and also form my battalion, which We needed many of under canvas. was new./those things which the reservists had out there/ Sengewald got busy and got Litzenberg to agree to let him form a company to fill out one of the battalions with reservists, and this is one that Thomas went out

reservists
 in, that company. But they couldn't find the/records. They put
 the records out there under canvas somewhere. Here they
 had thousands of Marines around that base and we couldn't get
 them, the Marines and the records, together. All this after they
 had totally disrupted an ongoing organization when it arrived,
 which just didn't make any sense at all and still doesn't.

I had Webb Sawyer as my exec in this new battalion.
 The time was just getting away from us. We had to be ready in
 five or six days to get on that ship. Time was getting away.
 We couldn't get the bodies we needed, although the base was full
 of bodies. We couldn't get them. So, Tom Tighe and Webb Sawyer
 got some crews together and some trucks and rode around the
 base and pick up volunteers. At times they got a whole
 working party off a job somewhere. They'd drive up and
 say, "Anybody want to go?" and in less than a day they got our
 entire complement of Marines like that. Then all we had
 to do was spend the next three or four days putting them into
 units and getting them trained and equipped, while trying
 to find their records.

Q: Did you finally find the ones that were left in the field?

Davis: Yes, we got the records. I had something like
 62% reservists, a lot of them from
 the 9th Battalion. They were issued a rifle they had never fired
 but were not permitted to go out and get the rifle they had just
 qualified on. That aggravated us considerably, as they hauled all
 new equipment in. They had this equipment cached away up in
 Barstow or somewhere, and they hauled a whole new package of

equipment in, and were still issuing it as we
got on the ships. It really happened in a hurry.

Q: Now, you were to participate in the Inchon operation.

Davis: Yes, we were the follow-on regiment at Inchon.

Q: Where did you go from the west coast?

Davis: Japan. We were there a couple of days and then went around
to Inchon and got ashore four or five days after D-Day or even
less.

Q: Did you have any problem with the 17-year-olds? You had to
clear them out, didn't you?

Davis: Yes. I've forgotten how many of those that we had. We
had to screen out a batch.

Q: And some people had to be sent to recruit training, did they
not?

Davis: Yes. We trained all the way over on the ship. We
took sandbags aboard and set up mortars on the fantail of the
ship and fired. It was the first time the guys had ever fired their
mortars. They had some mortar training on other mortars, but here
we had been issued these weapons and things as we were riding down
the road to get on the ship. We were firing
off the fantail all the way. The first time we fired it, there
was a missing message from our ship's captain over to the commo-
dore in charge and he was pretty much startled by all this racket.
We dropped boxes off the fantail and fired away. Then we

ran CPXs all the way with instruction and planning in a real effort to get the outfit ready. of operating We had two or three days/ashore when we first got there before we got into a fight. It wasn't long before it was a real top-notch outfit.

Q: What was your anticipation of Korea? It had been a couple of years since you had last been in combat.

Davis: Oh, I don't recall any ...I guess that World War II was so totally bloody that Korea initially wasn't all that bad.

Q: What about the anticipation of the landing, the tidal flats, and so on?

Davis: It seemed damned near impossible, but to think of water that goes up and down 32 feet. I was interested in a trip out there last year, they enclosed that whole thing with a gigantic rock containing wall and a lock system where they had upgraded the tonnage from a few thousand tons to 11 million tons a year.

They had made a major port out of those mud flats.

Q: Was it last year that you went? It was the 25th anniversary, I think.

Davis: It was the year before. It was a great trip for me. I saw an awful lot of friends, and was just totally startled at what those people have been able to do. You're talking about a disciplined society which has largely a self-discipline. It's unbelievable how hard those people work and how much they accomplish.

without any real driving force. They don't have a lot of people in jail. The police presence in Paris in 1963 was ten-fold over what I saw in Seoul, a city of 6½ million people--had a million and a half when we were there in the war. No obvious policing, just hard work. When I saw Seoul and they were showing us specific things, I asked to be taken out in the outer areas where I could remember the totally destitute life that they had. Gee, they had rebuilt all the roads. When I was there in 1951, almost every house in the village would have a grass thatched roof. Now, you can't find a thatched roof; they're all tile or metal. They rebuilt all the irrigation systems, the farms and everything. To me it is a miracle.

Q: How long were you out there for in '75?

Davis: Oh, what was it? The whole trip was about 8 or 9 days.

Q: Who went out with you?

Davis: I went out with Bruce Clark and others, just a group of military.

Q: You were invited out there to celebrate the 25th anniversary? You were the only Marine representative?

Davis: There was some totally disabled Marine and I've forgotten his name. I didn't go out with a Marine group. They gave us a choice of dates and I selected a date when I could go. It just

happened that way, happenstance that threw us in with a group.

Q: Of course the fighting has been pretty well chronicled about crossing the Han, going up to Seoul, taking and retaking it, and the major part of your story as far as Korea goes was the fighting around the reservoir.

Davis: Yes.

Q: What were the anticipations as you went up there?

Davis: Well, we had gone north of Seoul to Uijongbu with a lot of maneuver but little fighting on that. Mutt Emils, one of my company commanders, got shot on the way up to Uijongbu, up on a hill. No heavy fighting; just enough to sharpen up the wits of the troops. We came back down, got in the ships, and went around up off Wonsan, and then we had that five or six day steaming in circles while they tried to get the mine fields under control, and get us ashore. By that time, we were kind of behind the effort of the Koreans and the U.S. Army, and they were already up north.

End, Side 2, Tape 3

Begin, Side 1, Tape 4

Davis: We had landed at Wonsan, had gone up to Hamhung, and started up the valley towards the Chosin area. At that time, my anticipation was that the war was about over and that this was a security mission. That was confirmed by the kind of orders we were getting. With this kind of mission we set up shop in the valley while I collected up two or three jeeps to make a reconnaissance. I was going up into the mountains to visit with a Korean battalion and go over to look at another reservoir. This was going to be our mission, you know, to protect those reservoirs and keep anybody from blowing them up. Also to keep the roads open.

So, I cruised around out there all day long with three jeeps and a Korean interpreter and...

Q: This was November of '50?

Davis: The last of October, right at the end of October.

And we stopped in villages and talked to people, and we'd get rumors about some Chinese troops here and there without ever getting anything specific. We got up to a schoolhouse up in the hills there where a South Korean battalion had its headquarters. They had a half dozen Chinese there in their quilted blue suits. The Chinese said that they were just volunteers, they had just come to help their friends, the North Koreans. But the Korean battalion commander told me at that time, "This area is full of these people. We're convinced that they're here in organized units."

And so, with that, we went on back and still not thinking in terms of a major Chinese onslaught, but that was obviously

what it was to be. In the next few days we picked up from the various units a whole bunch of Chinese and had them there when Willoughby came over from Tokyo to prove that there were no Chinese in the war. He somehow convinced himself (he and his interpreters) that there was nothing to this, and he wouldn't believe that the Chinese were coming in. Obviously they were. Then, right away, we got the mission of moving on up towards the Chosin Reservoir, right up the valley. We ran into some pretty heavy opposition a couple of times, but got on up on top of the plateau on the Marine Corps birthday.

Q: It was pretty cold by then?

Davis: Yes, that hit suddenly on November the 10th; down at the foot of the mountain, before you go up on that curving road up to the plateau. I had taken a bath in the river, it was that warm. And two nights later it went down to 16 below zero, with the wind blowing. We got up in the morning. None of the vehicles would start. Troopers had their noses turn white, big spots on them, and fingers...it was just absolutely unbelievable change in the temperature in 24 hours.

Q: This was of course frostbite that they were getting.

Davis: Yes.

Q: Did you have adequate clothing?

Davis: Well, we had it but it hadn't been issued. The clothing was there, but as far as I know, there was no warning that we would go from, in two days, where the temperature was such that you could enjoy a bath in the river to that kind of temperature. But, the clothing was distributed quickly. It would have been better had we been smarter to do it the day before,

Q: Did you have to evacuate any of these frostbite people?

Davis: I don't recall. I don't recall that there were any that serious at that time. We were kind of stalled in place for a day even though we had planned to move on up to Hagaru-ri. We didn't move because the vehicles wouldn't go. Everything just froze solid so we delayed everything a day. We got ourselves, got our wits collected, got busy and went on up.

Q: Had it started snowing yet?

Davis: No, it started about that time, I guess, as we approached Hagaru, we ran into the snow. It was not snowing when we left Koto-ri.

Q: Was there any great concern that you were going to get zapped shortly?

Davis: No. No, I was concerned just before we went up on the plateau because as we approached the road that led up to the plateau, there was a little town at the foot of the pass, with a railroad station. The road curved, and we had a lot of people on that road. Of course, on the side were screening forces as we moved along

as
without opposition. But there were a lot of tank tracks around

I was concerned and admonished the AOs to get busy and find out where those tanks were, because we were pretty much exposed on that road. It was one of those Korean roads that were built right up along a river bank and into another sharp rise, so you were trapped on that road with

jeeps, communication vehicles, and so forth. But since AO's couldn't find the tanks, we sent elements of the Recon Company with two or three of their jeeps up ahead.

They ran headlong into a tank ambush up that road

just around the bend where we couldn't quite see what was going on. I moved up as I got the radio message and got up there to see what was going on, and they had buried tanks under debris in this village.

Our recon outfit had gone in on them so fast, that they were still hiding, closed up, some crew members under the tanks

We got grenades down into two of the tanks before the guys even knew we were there. One of the tanks had started to move as I had come around the bend with my jeep. We had some antitank mines in the jeep which I picked up when I got wind of these tanks, hoping that somehow I could keep them from running over my whole column (laughs).

I'll never forget this young Marine I had with me as a runner. He wasn't the smartest kid in the world but he was a real Gung Ho Marine in every other way. We had a couple of ^{empty} sandbags. I said, "You put this mine in this sandbag and," I had already checked him out on how to operate it, "and you go there to

that culvert where the road is narrow and if that tank starts down this road, I want you to put that thing under its tracks," and I sent a Marine on the other side to do the same thing. He was pretty smart. He knew exactly what he was going to do.

But my runner thought that I wanted him to hold it under that track while the tank ran over it. (laughs) He was wide-eyed about that, so much so that I could see something was wrong. I made him tell me back what he was going to do. Then I told him, "Now, that's not the way you do it. You put the thing there and hightail it out of the way!" A Corsair came in--this tank was well up ahead--the Corsair came in and hit him with a rocket. With that another tank started to wiggle. It was inside of a shack and was immediately hit. There were five tanks. And if we'd tarried, if that recon outfit had been the least bit slow, and if they'd gotten themselves organized in time, they could have really killed us.

We really didn't have anything to fight them with. We didn't have any good weaponry at that time to knock those tanks out.

Q: No bazookas?

Davis: No, these were the T-34s, and whatever we had was too light to handle them. I've forgotten the specifics of that. We had 57mm recoilless rifles, the small recoilless rifles, and they wouldn't handle them. Our own tanks were still working their way up there and hadn't gotten up there that far yet.

Q: No warning yet from Division or anything about being on the lookout?

Davis: For the tanks?

Q: No, for the Chinese?

Davis: Oh, yes, we had a pretty heavy fight about the first day we launched to go up there on that plateau. We had a heavy battle with some Chinese as they came down the railroad.

I had some people athwart the railroad on either side and we heard the Chinese dragging little wheeled machine guns (you could hear the things cracking on the crossties) and we all knew what was happening. We knew there was a sizable force of Chinese coming down that railroad, right in the middle of our formation. We were somehow able to keep our calm and get them trapped in there at daybreak. We stacked them up like cordwood. One report that I recall, in that total force of close to 600, we killed all but a handful. It was an eerie sound, when the buglers started to blow their call, as they first discovered they were in trouble; their buglers sounding some kind of a battle call would get hit right in the middle of a note, and it'd just die off. That happened to two buglers.

We knew that the Chinese were after us in force, right then.

Q: Still you went on, though. You sent on your troops.

Davis: Oh, yes. We were going. I don't think that we knew that they had six or eight divisions up that road (laughs). We were

still dealing with the smaller groups. We had no serious opposition after that up into Hagaru and on out the way. I had the lead going to Yudamni and, again, on those roads on the side of a precipice that overlooked a deep valley, they had built. 20 or 30 roadblocks, a few hundred yards apart. At curves in the road they put a lot of trash and mines and stuff, but the ground was frozen. They couldn't dig anything in and our pioneer/engineer effort got rid of it all just about as fast as we came onto it. So, it was obvious that they didn't want us to follow too closely for whatever purpose.

Q: Now, were you the division lead?

Davis: Going to Hagaru, yes.

Q: The rest of the division was following behind.

Davis: Yes, well two regiments went to Hagaru, the 7th and the 5th, Ray Murray.

Q: How many troops would be out on the flanks?

Davis: Well, along that road, there was no such thing as a flank. What you would do would be to have a unit over on the far side of the valley, on the ridge, and somebody up on the ridges on this side. You just kind of screened your way along. But on this narrow, winding road, you just kind of exposed everybody. There was no where to go. You were against the bank, solid wall on this side, and a sheer precipice on this side. Very few breaks.

Q: Now, when did you get the first major attack?

Davis: He hit everywhere at once, you know. The Army went straight north from Hagaru and got chopped up at the same time that Fox Company, which was out in the pass, got hit hard and our troops around Yudamni got hit hard. Everywhere at the same time; it was a coordinated effort on the part of the Chinese.

Not long after we got to Yudamni we were doing some deep patrolling. I got into the edge of the valley complex of Yudamni and had protection of that entrance in as my mission. The remaining forces passed through and spread out on all sides of the valley, turned and headed west. So, it was my mission to keep long patrols going back down the ridges of both sides of the road back towards where we had come from.

Q: That was pretty rugged going.

Davis: Yes, and by this time deep snow and freezing cold ^{the} added to / trouble. I was out rescuing units a number of nights til one o'clock in the morning to get them down out of those hills and get their wounded in hand and get them back into their positions in the perimeter.

Q: How could guys survive under these conditions?

Davis: Well, we were well clothed by this time. It was bitter cold. On that trip I took around the hills to rescue Fox Company, the artillery in the valley was reporting 24 below zero and we were up in the mountains and hills with the wind. It was

a numbing cold. There were some old pits where the Chinese had been; and to be sure that we were going in the right direction, I would get down in one of these pits and recheck my map orientation with a compass. I remember twice crawling down, poncho over me, with flashlight, getting my map oriented, to check out the direction; then fixed my hand for a marker, turn the light out and lift off the poncho and get up to check the direction, and I couldn't remember what had happened down there under that poncho. I'd get up and just stand there in a daze. Two or three people standing around would have a few words to say and by that time I had forgotten what it was I was trying to do. I'd have to go down and do this thing all over again. Everybody had to repeat back to you two or three times to be sure of what was supposed to happen. We were just absolutely numb in the cold. It was hard to believe.

This was when the column was crossing some ridges as they paralleled the valley to the east. There was a natural inclination for the troops to keep moving closer to that valley, which was under heavy fire from our own artillery. My radio wouldn't work. With my radio man and my runner, we moved forward trying to get troops in the column to pass the word up to halt the lead elements. We were well back, and the main body was using a single file because the deep ice and snow made it difficult to go. Our recon found no

evidence of enemy forces, so to make time we were just following in trace, one trail, this whole main body.

I'd have Marines pass the word up to halt the column, but it never would get passed by more than two or three men when one would say, "Shut up that noise," and that was the end of it. So, I had to beat my way all the way to the head of that column; when I got there and I could hardly breathe but got them stopped, redirected in the way they were supposed to go.

We finally got to the top, to the summit of a very difficult and torturous ridge where we had to climb up on our hands and knees, holding onto roots and twigs to keep from sliding back down the icy trail.

Q: With the whole battalion following you?

Davis: Yes, I finally got up on the top as the moon came out bright. We could see that we were about 1500 yards from Fox Company. It was 2:30 or 3 o'clock in the morning, so I decided to stay there until daylight before getting involved with Fox Company. We didn't have adequate communications with them.

But the troops, when I got them off the top of that hill, they'd just fall out like flies. They couldn't stay on their feet, and I became alarmed about that to

the degree that I got the companies each to organize three-man teams of NCOs to get the troops into position and go around and keep somebody on alert through the few hours we had before daylight. Then I decided to take a short nap, and as I was crawling into a little place there alongside of a couple of rocks and pull this hood of my sleeping bag up over my head, I took a machine gun bullet right through here. It went through the cloth and skinned my head.

The next day I got a close hit from a shell of some kind, which caused me to fall down a little incline. It knocked me down.

Those were the only times that I had such close shaves, except for the time that our own artillerymen put two bullets through my coat. They went in the coat belt high at my right hip, two clean holes just through the coat,

but missed my flesh there by a hair.

Q: Of course this severe weather was affecting the Chinese also.

Davis: Oh yes, they were just totally frozen. It was unbelievable. I had a big sergeant named Schaeffer in my battalion S-2 section (he had been with me in the Chicago reserves) as and we walked up on top of one of these little hills there in the snow he said, "Come over here, Colonel, I want to show you something." He reached down and just pulled this solid chunk up out of the hole, and it was a Chinese soldier, and I said, "Is he dead?" He said, "No, his eyes are moving," and that's all he could move, his eyes. I don't know how he kept from freezing to death, because he was just stiff and he could wiggle his eyes a little bit. We went around and found a half a dozen

of them up there. It must have been some kind of little outpost, but every one of them had frozen in their holes. That one was the only one that I saw any life in at all.

Q: Did you send him to the rear?

Davis: We trudged along with him awhile, but he didn't make it. He just...

Q: He died?

Davis: Yes. The reaction in his eyes was the only life he had in him. We found them all over the place, just absolutely frozen. They had padded clothing on them, but then they'd have tennis shoes on with no socks.

I swore that I'd never complain about Georgia heat after that session. It was cold!

In the morning we were able to raise Fox Company and, of course, the classic remark from Bill Barber was/^{to ask}if he could send some troops out to help us to the perimeter. We declined although we were carrying 22 stretcher cases by this time.

Q: Of your own?

Davis: Yes. We had some long-range fire. We never did come right up against any close-in combat on that trek after we got free of the perimeter. We had to fight our way out/^{of}the Chinese forces immediately around Yudamni that first day, but once we got out through that little crest they had around, we didn't bump into any more close in. They were shooting at us from the next ridge.

Q: Had you gotten orders yet for the division to turn around?

Davis: I'm not sure of the sequence of events there. I thought that was what triggered our move back from Yudamni to Hagaru...

Q: The orders were to retrieve Bill Barber's company and bring it back into the perimeter?

Davis: I don't recall that at that time I had orders what to do after I got to Barber. There was an exchange on the radio where some of Murray's lead elements were having trouble, particularly along this torturous road that I had described before, and he was suggesting to Litzenberg that I send a company back down there to help him out. At this time I got orders from Litzenberg not to do that, but to ensure that the pass was cleaned out, because he was confident that they could work their way back/ to the pass. They were far enough along at this time that they could work their way up to Fox Company around the road because we had immediately put enough force around to clean out two or three pockets of Chinese ahead/ of them, and Litzenberg didn't want to get our force back down in that valley involved with the 5th Marines.

With that, we cleaned out the area around the pass and the fingers leading down to Hagaru, then we were told, as the units from Yudamni started to arrive, we were told to move on to Hagaru. We didn't find any opposition, so we were really barrelling along there when Fred Dowsett/ tried to catch me and give me some more precise orders. And he had a hell of a time catching us, as we were really rolling at this time. When he caught us we outposted some

precise key points along the route that were to be held until the column got through. This took two companies (I had H Company with me). Dowsett and I led the other companies on into Hagaru.

Unfortunately, a problem arose after a long column had come through; one of my company commanders came down to the road to talk to some people and he claimed that he was assured that that was the end of the column, so he picked up and joined in and came on in. This was in error since it was only a break in the column; later a few Chinese came in where he was supposed to be and attacked an artillery unit with the result that we lost two or three artillery pieces. The pieces got off the road and had to be destroyed, and made Colonel Litzenberg most unhappy, naturally; a company had been posted there but it had moved by mistake. (We had no radio contact at that time because all batteries were dead.)

Q: From Hagaru you stayed how long?

Davis: A very short time. Two or three days at the most.

Q: It was at Hagaru that an airstrip was scraped out for evacuation, wasn't it?

Davis: Yes, that was the place where they flew them out.

Q: Of course that was under attack, too.

Davis: Yes, we had troops all around. As we left, we had a different concept coming out of Hagaru. From Yudamni down, the concept was to secure the route as we went and then pull the security forces in behind. We had protective patches all the way. That was the theory. It leaked a little bit here

and there, but that was the theory. The theory was changed going from Hagaru to Koto-ri to one of sending a ball down to clean out; then there would be a long column, and then another security force at the rear. This didn't quite work. We got into some problems with it. Young Harris was lost in there somewhere as the Chinese got to the road in a couple of places.

Q: Is that where John McLaughlin got captured? And the Royal Marines?

Davis: Yes, that was a few days before. They were trying to come up to Hagaru from Koto-ri to open the road. I've forgotten the timing, but it happened before we moved back down that way.

But on this move going south, I was to be on the hill mass to the right of the road, across the river (it was a pretty good stream). We launched at first light, and we were just as lucky as could be. As my lead elements got to where we were supposed to be at daylight, they discovered an extra hill knob that we had not seen from our reconnaissance and it wasn't on the map. When one of my patrols walked up there, they found the place just full of Chinese, but they were not alert. Our patrol was large, so they got themselves set and just shot all these Chinese before they could react. Boy, we would have been sitting ducks if those guys had been awake, because they were looking right down our throats there in the snow from a position where we would have been hard-pressed to get to them in a hurry.

Q: These were your Ridge-Runners?

Davis: Yes. We headed on down the ridge. Our's was the high side and was getting more and more torturous with steep slopes covered with ice and snow. We were going slower and slower even with no opposition. Meantime, Colonel Litzenberg and his other battalions (I think Sawyer was on the other side) started to get ahead because of much lower terrain on that other side plus the road to work from. They finally went so far ahead with no opposition (they weren't getting any fire from my side). Litzenberg told me (we were about half-way to Koto-ri) to come down and join the force on the road. As we started down one of those long fingers in the moonlight and the snow, one of our tanks started to shoot at us with a machine gun at extremely long range. Their bullets were peppering all around. You could see the snow flying throughout our formation. We couldn't get anybody on the radio. Finally, one of our radio operators got on the tank frequency and he could hear this tanker bragging about how he was cleaning up this attack up on the hill (laughs). He broke in and told him to knock it off because those were Marines he was shooting at. The gunner just said, "Oh my God!" and quit shooting.

Miraculously we didn't have a single person hit even though he fired hundreds of rounds on that hill. We moved on down, but an artillery unit didn't get the word because we were fired on again. As more people would go down, the trails got slicker and slicker. At this one place where we'd been sliding down, hanging on to rocks, there were no roots

left and the incline was solid ice. It was ^{steep} like going down a sliding/board. Just wham! and you'd hit the bottom. (laughs) A big Marine behind me hit this thing and it almost knocked him out. So we had to call back up and tell them to use a new path because that was getting dangerous.

And with all this noise and commotion, we assumed that the friendlies all knew that we were there. We got across the little river using some rocks where we could work our way across. But as we walked out of the bushes and up towards the road we heard rifle shots. They were shooting at us; we didn't know who they were. All you could do was yell and boy, my guys really yelled! We got the shooting stopped but not before I got two shots through my coat and a lot of people got little minor scrapes and wounds, but nobody got killed. It was just amazing. That's made me wonder many times, those two incidents--the tank fire against our group and the riflemen shooting at us at point-blank range--I wondered how effective our fire-power really was against the enemy forces.

And with that, we went on into Koto-ri. Meantime, Dowsett ^{was} had been hit and evacuated, and I moved up to be Litzenberg's exec for the 7th Marines.

Q: Who took over your battalion?

Davis: Sawyer?

Q: Yes, I guess he did. Once you hit Koto-ri, did you figure that it was going to be a piece of cake from then on in?

Davis: We had no idea. Buck Schmuck had supposedly come up with his company positions around key places through the pass / his company positions around key places in the pass. So we hoped that there wouldn't be any problem getting down off the plateau.

There was a lot of excitement at one time because many of the civilians who had been left behind got themselves organized and moved down a couple of ridges over (about a mile or so from Koto-ri) and were working their way along, trying to escape down the mountain. We had a report that some enemy massive/formations were in that direction, to the west, but it turned out to be the civilians.

Q: Were there any Chinese with them?

Davis: I'm not aware that they were with them. Again, the few Chinese that I remember seeing going down from Koto-ri were all frozen, groups all dead. Small/ of them here and there/frozen stiff. I don't know whether they had been shot or just frozen from the weather.

Q: After Koto-ri, there wasn't too much that happened except for filling in the place, the bridge at the causeway, at the penstocks, I think. It was Partridge, the division engineer, I think...

Davis: They air-dropped the bridge and got that in.

Q: Did you ever think that you were going to make it back and get warm again?

Davis: I never thought that I would not. You take those things

an hour at a time. One more hour and I'll make it. No, I never felt that kind of desperation.

Q: I wasn't thinking so much about the opposition, but the cold. Everything that I've read and everything I've heard about the effect of cold...

Davis: You wouldn't dare let yourself go to sleep in an exposed position or anything like that. You'd never wake up.

Q: Did the company commanders and the unit leaders have to kick tail all the way down?

Davis: Oh yes. They had to ensure that people kept going, and another thing, they had to be sure that troops changed socks every 24 hours. You know that we didn't have those good insulated boots that they had later. This was the early version with a felt pad. We had extra felt pads and an extra pair of socks which we kept in against our stomach until they dried. Meantime, if we got much past 12 hours, that pad would be frozen, would freeze our foot. We'd start to get in trouble if we went too long. So, it was an effort on the part of the troop leaders to be sure that everybody got their socks and felt pads changed periodically. Water was/a problem, even though the ground was covered with snow. We'd go along constantly eating snow trying to get our thirst under control. The canteens were totally frozen even though a couple of bottles of sick bay alcohol were added. A runner of mine was determined that he was going to get a canteen of

water somehow. In his effort he would get a lot of little old twigs every time we stopped and build up the tiniest little fire. Then he'd pile his canteen cup full of snow and keep piling snow into it while trying to keep his fire going. But it would evaporate about as fast as it would melt. He kept working, working, working, until finally I said, "You can't melt snow," and he just gave up.

Q: Of course the high altitude had something to do with that. You were a couple of thousand feet up, weren't you?

Davis: Yes, one of those passes was close to 5,000 feet, as I recall.

And, of course, food, the only thing that you could eat at times like that would be crackers. I lived off of crackers and canned fruit for two or three days on the trail. A frozen can of fruit could be put inside your clothes and it would thaw out enough where you could eat it. The crackers, of course, didn't freeze. Everything else was frozen so hard that you couldn't get it thawed and eat it.

Q: I understand that there were many cases of gastritis because of eating the frozen Charlie ration.

Davis: Yes. But we had one great meal at Thanksgiving just before we got to Yudamni. I talked Litzenberg into letting us have a day off to have our Thanksgiving meal. We had gone out west from Hagaru, the first ones out before the turkey and everything arrived. So we were going to miss Thanksgiving and I knew that my troops really needed that. We had stacks of

turkey, all frozen hard as could be, but we did have a couple of pyramidal tents and we had several of the stoves that come along with the field kitchens. I couldn't get any of the cooks to optimistically tackle the job of thawing out that turkey and getting it cooked and prepared for the meal. Everyone of them, from the chief cook on down said it was impossible, there was no way you can do a thing like that; and this was the night before. One of the officers in headquarters finally came up with an idea. He took two or maybe three of these pyramidal tents and put them one on top of the other in some way, wrapped one around the other with all the turkey inside. Then put two stoves in the middle of the pile of turkey and sealed all this up with snow and brush. He fired it up, and the next morning had those turkeys thawed out to where they could be cut up into a size where they could get them cooked. The troops really enjoyed that. They had been out there long enough to be good and hungry.

How's the time? Are we about ready to quit?

Q: Well, I think that maybe this is about the right time to quit for tonight.

Davis: Suits me.

Q: For tonight. We've put in a full day. For the record, it's 10:30 and we've been going since 2 o'clock.

* * * * *

Q: This is a continuation on 3 February 1977 of the session that we had yesterday and last night, and we ended off as the division was heading out of Koto-ri down to Hungnam, and you

told me to remind you of the loading of the troops on the train down at Hungnam.

Davis: Down off the mountain a rail head had been established but I'm not sure exactly where that was. It was all established while we were up in the hill. A train was shuttling from the base of the mountain down to a reception area near the coast.

Q: You didn't have to march all the way to the sea, then?

Davis: No, just down to the railroad station. We had our troops assembled as they came down. I remember Ed Snedeker was there and directed us to get on the train. In the process the flow of the troops down the mountain was not fully organized, a lot of stray elements got into our group. I grabbed a few officers and NCOs whom I knew and got it started. We were somewhat disorganized as the train pulled in, but were about to get onto the cars for the short ride down in the valley.

About this time over on one side, where there had been a canvas covering up what looked like a stockpile of some kind, a soldier opened the canvas and yelled out where all could hear, "Anybody want some candy? Come over and get some candy!" We saw a big pile of boxes of candy and that was the first time that I realized how starved we all were. We lost control there for a while. The only way I could resolve this was to send some of my leaders around behind the pile, grab as many boxes as they could carry and put the candy on the

train cars. Once we got boxes of candy on the cars, the troops crawled on the cars to get at the candy, and off we went.

Q: Was it warmer down there than it was higher?

Davis: No, it was still cold. Of course, we had all our gear on, our parkas and everything. It was a cold ride down in that open train, but no colder than we were accustomed to up in the hills.

Q: Well, I think that for the record we ought to indicate that for your rescue of Bill Barber's Company F, 2d Battalion, 7th, you received the Medal of Honor; and the documentation and the wording, etc., will be in the beginning of this transcript together with the biography that we include. Also, Bill Barber, who was a company commander then, received the Medal of Honor.

One thing about the march up to the reservoir, up to Yudamni, all the time you had tremendous support from air, did you not?

Davis: Both going and coming. This was the ideal close air support with our air liaison officers being pilots from the nearby squadrons. On one occasion when the situation was tense, the pilots overhead were just talking casually to Danny, my ALO...and the flight leader said as he was leaving, "Danny, we'll see you tomorrow morning." Danny said, "Damn you. There's two or three hours 'til dark yet. You're going to see me again before dark. You get your ass back up here," and they did.

Q: The Air Force was dropping supplies down, also.

Davis: Yes, we got some fine drops, particularly at the time we arrived at Fox Company in that little isolated area way out there at nowhere, in blinding snow. You couldn't even see the planes coming in, but I guess that they had been there enough to know where it was. The parachutes came right into the area but we hardly saw the planes, the visibility was so poor.

Q: A lot of the drops fell into Chinese hands, though.

Davis: There's no doubt about that, although the Chinese weren't really that free to operate around close to where Fox Company was. Our Marines had pretty good observation of the area.

Q: When you reached Bill Barber, the sun was out?

Davis: Yes. We stopped up on a hilltop overlooking the mountain until daylight, because we didn't want to get involved near Fox Company in the night with the communications so poor.

Q: Did you have to fight your way out, back to the regiment? You had to fight your way up...

Davis: No, once we reached this pinnacle overlooking Fox Company, about a thousand or 1,500 yards away, there was nothing between it and Barber's position. After we got down to Barber's position, we found that he was really some distance away from the pass, Toktong Pass. It doesn't look far on the map, but it was obvious that we had to get ourselves organized and go clean out the pass. Also, there were Chinese dragging machine

guns (the weather was closing in, but we could spot them from time to time) coming down another mountain south of us. We had the problem of attacking them, also.

Q: I've seen pictures of the terrain, and it looked like that it had to be some of the roughest terrain that Marines have ever had to encounter.

Davis: Most torturous, and/I've indicated a couple of times, when you go ^{over} the snow for a while with a lot of people, it soon gets packed into a slick, icy mass, and on those steep slopes, you just crawl on your hands and knees, grasping for roots and sticks and anything you could get hold of to negotiate. It was just that difficult.

Q: Outside of your casualties, did you lose any people making your way up to Bill Barber or on the way back, I mean guy who just passed out, lost their way, or what have you?

Davis: No, I think that went in fine order. The casualties we had on the point of breakout, we sent back down to our rear left in Yudamni, and as I remember, we had 23 dead and stretcher-borne wounded when we got to Barber's place.

Q: The buddy system and command and control really worked.

Davis: Yes, and after the break-out, there wasn't any severe fighting, as I've indicated earlier. It was long-range fire from all sides, just firing at this moving mass of Marines, but we didn't have any hard assault type operations, so the casualties weren't extreme.

Q: Are you familiar with any of the events surrounding this Task Force Faith, the Army unit that went across the ice and was clobbered?

Davis: Not first-hand. I was involved with ^{the reorganized} / elements that came out of Koto-ri with us, just because they were part of our formation. That was all.

Q: What happened when you got down south, when you got off the train?

Davis: Well, in the first place let me indicate how hungry we were. To my amazement afterwards, on the train ride down, I had consumed five or six of these great large Tootsie Rolls. The next two or three hours in the camp we had a continuous chow line with enormous pancakes, and I ate something like 17 or 18 pancakes in two hours...

End, Side 1, Tape 4

Begin, Side 2, Tape 4

Davis: This just indicates how hungry the troops really were, because those young fellows certainly outdid me in the chow line.

Q: Now, Colonel Snedeker was there, he was going to relieve Colonel Litzenberg as commander of the 7th Marines, or was he on the division staff?

Davis: No, he was on the staff. He seemed to be in charge of the evacuation process.

Q: He was the chief of staff, I believe.

Davis: I think so. I just remembered that he was a friendly face that greeted us once we got down. And almost immediately we began embarkation aboard the ships to move down to the south.

I don't remember a whole lot about that, except we came into the reception area, we got ourselves organized, and we got on the ships.

Q: And then you went down to the Bean Patch at Masan.

Davis: Right.

Q: Now you stayed with the division until June of 1951, so you were involved with the first UN counteroffensive.

Davis: Yes.

Q: This was after MacArthur's relief and when Ridgway had taken over.

Davis: Yes, we stayed in the Bean Patch for a while...you know, it was a major effort to get re-equipped and rebuilt. In those operations up north, we lost really large numbers ^{of weapons} / --the BAR really wouldn't work in the freezing nor the carbines.

As our numbers decreased, as they hauled the casualties out and we lost more and more people, everybody got equipped with an M-1, officers and all, because this was the weapon that would work. You could depend on it. The carbines and the BARs, you just couldn't keep them in operation, so they

were the weapons that got turned in, or lost, or abandoned. whatever.

Q: I understand that it was so cold that the artillery had a problem with the hydraulic fluid...

Davis: I recall some of that now, but I don't remember the specifics.

Q: It was really an on-the-job experience in cold-weather training.

Davis: Yes, it really was, and I'll never cease to admire and be amazed at the motor transport operation up north. You know, those long, winding roads -- snowpacked, narrow, torturous... We had convoys of trucks, young Marine truckdrivers and shotgun riders, traveling those trails day and night, subjected any time to being killed or being run off the road. But they saw it through!

Q: I think that at this time, when you were getting ready for the counteroffensive, General Thomas had relieved General Smith had he not? And you were still exec of the regiment?

Davis: Yes, I assumed that position after Fred Dowsett had been shot coming out of Hagaru.

Q: What was the nature of the operations at this time? Was it still as cold?

Davis: Well, it was wintertime in the Bean Patch, cold, but nothing like up north. We had to get refurbished, but we

We were
were in tents with oil heat./getting reorganized and doing
a lot of patrol work as much for training as
anything else. Then we were moved up north. I got my
first helicopter ride at that time. I went up in one of those
little Bell helicopters from the Bean Patch to our position
up on the coast.

Pohang was the name of the place that we
went initially.

Q: Had Ridgway visited your outfit?

Davis: He did many times; I can't remember the precise schedul-
ing of that, but, yes, he did. A very impressive field commander.
We had seen him down south, and we had seen him from time to
time during our operations.

We got the division back together up at Pohang There
was just an increasing number of operations with long motor
moves up and up and up until we got in the center portion of
Korea. Then there followed the yo-yo time when we would work
up a good offensive and go way up. Then there would be an
onfall from the Chinese, a break somewhere in the line, and then
we'd move the entire front back over two or three ridgelines.

The Chinese offensive would run out of steam and we'd
get orders to go back and gain some more. It was just a terrible
effort in a way and I'm not prepared to say whether there was
a better way to do it. But that's the way they were doing it:
push forward until it would apparently back the Chinese into
a position where they'd respond with a massive offensive. Our
counter to it was just to move everybody back and let the thing

run out of steam and then go after them again.

Q: What about, what was the attitude of the division, its moral after leaving the reservoir? There must have been a feeling of relief at getting out of there, that situation, but was there a feeling that it had been a retreat? Was there a feeling that you had been euchred, that the Eighth Army had really screwed up?

Davis: No, I don't believe that. S.L.A. Marshall was there with us and spent a lot of time with us in the Bean Patch. ^{He was} conducting reviewing interviews and/everything else, and so these kind of things got talked about some. But I don't think that as far as the troops and their commanders were concerned, there was anything like this. You know, when you're totally committed to get yourself re-organized and get back into the fight, that's about the only thing that you have on your mind. That's the position we were in, I think. Getting ready to go again.

Q: Well, it was an epic move, regardless of whether it was a withdrawal or a retreat.

Davis: Oh, absolutely. Just a miraculous performance, again demonstrating that these fine young Americans can do anything when they have to.

Q: What about the attitude regarding MacArthur's relief and Ridgway taking over? Did this reach down to your level? Did it make any difference?

Davis: I can't recall that it had any major impact at all.

Q: It wasn't like the time that Halsey relieved Ghormley.

Davis: No, at that time it was kind of a jubilant feeling that our lives were going to be saved when Halsey came in. No, the MacArthur thing was a very distant problem. We had seen MacArthur a number of times and he was just the great man that came to see us and that was about all. I don't think that he had any great influence on our people. Among the senior people around, there was a lot of ill-feeling, and I guess the pet target was Ned Almond, who had been the Corps commander up there. He was a kind of a broad-brush pusher who was at odds at all times with our division staff and our division commander, and we were all aware of that. I'm sure that you've heard of that. If we had anybody to be mad at, he was the ideal target, he was right there.

Q: What about the Spring offensive? The Chinese offensive?

Davis: Those times all run together in my memory.

I was a little bit provoked at what we were doing to the Korean divisions. We were next to the Blue Star Division, for example, and we had 7th Marines liaison officers over there since they were on our flank. We'd get reports of how the Koreans would be run way up ahead in small groups, get all scattered and sometimes out of reach of their own artillery. As the Blue Star forward elements got scattered around in the hills, sure enough the Chinese onfall would come. It would rip right down through these Koreans and the Koreans would obviously vanish...

Q: That was the 2d ROK Division, wasn't it?

Davis: I've forgotten. I just remember the Blue Star. I felt that much of the problem of the Korean Army division and next to us was faulty deployment/ faulty leadership, either through American Army advisors or their own leaders. They were trying to use these Koreans in a way that highly professional soldiers might operate, but certainly not troops that had limited training and experience as they seemed to have.

So, when the onfall would come, right down their area, we'd be in a position of having the Chinese going right down our flank. So we'd have to bend back and protect our flank, and then word would come from the high command to move us back 15 or 20 miles to get back from this salient on our flank. Now that didn't happen to Korean Marines because I think that we took better care of them. We kept them a little better in hand, so to speak, and kept them protected with our artillery. I never saw that happen to Korean Marines when they were operating with us. But, I saw it happen two or three times with these Korean Army divisions. From reports from our people over there (these lieutenants and captains) you could almost see it coming because they'd always lose contact with their forward elements. It was back interesting in our move/up that the Chinese apparently had meet elements well forward to/ our patrols. We'd move our lines forward, so to speak, into good positions and then we'd launch a very heavy patrol action out front. These patrols would, the first day, bump into some Chinese on the first terrain features

Chinese
 We'd drive the /off with artillery and air, clean them up and work on them hard. Come nightfall, they'd all pull back to the next terrain feature. Then our patrols would clean up that area and go on to the next obvious terrain features, and here they'd be again. We'd go through the same thing. We'd have a little skirmish with them with the patrol and then bring our supporting arms on them and work on them hard, and when dark came, they'd disappear.

Now, one way you could tell the difference between a North Korean unit and a Chinese unit was that the North Korean unit wouldn't disappear. They'd stay there and fight. The Chinese, apparently, had a more flexible tactic. They'd get the hell out of there. And after you'd done this a while and kept moving forward with your patrols clearing the way, you'd finally run into their main forces. Their reaction was^{to} throw one of these offensives into you.

Q: Sort of a war of attrition.

Davis: Yes. But the Chinese offensives were always kind of limited because they'd run out of steam, they'd run out of food, they'd run out of communications. They'd just take off and they weren't organized to support a continuing offensive. It was just a mad dash with a lot of units going down and trying to find a soft spot and dive through. Soon it would just run out of steam. That's when we'd collect ourselves up and head back north again.

Q: In other words, at a certain point the Chinese tactics were pretty well analyzed and countermeasures could be taken.

Davis: Yes, you could almost feel that they were going 10 or 15 miles. That was as far as you had to anticipate them coming in one of these offensives, through that part of the country. It might have been different in the flatlands. In our area, they'd start to run out of steam. Our radio people were picking up messages how units were lost and out of contact with no artillery. Disorganization took place as they got deeper into our area.

That terrain in the center had high mountains, winding roads, rivers, very rugged, everything^{moved}/on foot. We finally solved our logistics problem with cargo companies, these companies of Koreans with A-frames.

Q: Cargadores. The Korean Service Corps, the KSC.

Davis: Yes, that's what it was. That became the solution for keeping our troops supplied in the hills.

Q: They were pretty rugged characters.

Davis: Yes, they could carry a load.

Q: I guess that by the time you got your orders to go back to the states, you weren't too unhappy to leave Korea.

Davis: Well, no. It was just one of those things. You're told that you're going to be there for a while and when the time came, I don't recall any great jubilation or relief. Things had kind of slowed down pretty much to a routine

by May. Meantime, Nickerson had come in and relieved Litzenberg and run the latter parts of that Spring campaign for

the 7th Marines.

Q: Then you were ordered back to the States...you were with the division until June of '51.

Davis: The end of May.

Q: And you went back to Headquarters, the G-3 Division. Who was the G-3 at the time?

Davis: Smoak.

Q: Eustace?

Davis: Eustace Smoak.

Q: He was a BG?

Davis: No, he was a colonel. It was a colonel's billet.

Q: Wasn't he a rough one?

Davis: No, I didn't find him that way. I had never worked for him before, but I didn't find him difficult to work for at all. And then Tommy Wornham came in to be the 3.

Q: Had you known at this time that you had been put up for the Medal of Honor?

Davis: Yes, I knew at the Bean Patch that Litzenberg had written it up, but I think that it was among those things that got burnt up in the big fire down at division headquarters.

Q: Did they have a fire down there?

Davis: Yes, they had a big fire down at Masan. The citation got run back and forth for a long time and I think there was some delay because of the fire, but it didn't come to pass until '52. It was a difficult kind of citation because they weren't accustomed to giving these things for a command performance, so to speak. Most Medal of Honor awards were based on an individual suicidal type of act or a totally personal heroic exposure. I was told by somebody--I've forgotten the circumstances--that mine took a lot of effort to convince themselves and others that this kind of thing was worthy of a decoration.

And on the other hand, there were many others, maybe not in the Marine Corps, but there were others where this kind of thing has happened before, and since. Merritt Edson's was one of those type of leadership awards...

Q: And Vandegrift's?

Davis: Vandegrift's and Dave Shoup's.

Q: So there was precedence for it.

Davis: Yes. In retrospect, it doesn't seem valid now that such a concern would have come up unless it was at the time that everything they were seeing were heroic acts and in this war this was the first time this sort of thing came through, for leadership over a period.

Q: Do you remember the circumstances of the award and so on?

Davis: Yes, I was over on a junket in Europe. We had gone over to observe some maneuvers in Turkey with Brigadier General Butler, Bill Jones, Willy Enright. A team of us had gone over to observe for Headquarters Marine Corps, and I was in Istanbul when the message came ordering me back.

That became an interesting challenge because Louie Plain was in charge of getting me back. He was seated in the Personnel Department. The party was going back to Paris, and I was supposed to fly out of Paris in time for the White House presentation (a very short time involved). But, as we flew over Paris, heavy snowfall had just covered the runway and they sent us on to London. I couldn't get a flight out of London. At this time, you know, money was tight and they weren't going to pay commercially to get me back. No flights! Messages going back and forth between the Navy headquarters in London and the Marine Corps about getting me back by a certain date and wanting assurance that I was going to be back. Finally they sent me up on a small airplane to Prestwick, Scotland. I got there just in time to jump from one airplane and made it back. Of course, everybody in Headquarters Marine Corps was provoked at me and concerned that I hadn't responded more smartly to orders to get back. But you know, I got back just as fast as possible.

Q: What else had they expected you to do?

Davis: Well, seated in Washington, it was hard to visualize somebody being lost and stranded . . . around in Europe, but that's what happened to us.

Q: Evidently, the naval authorities in London did all that they could to get you out.

Davis: Well, it seemed so. All I was doing was pressing people to get me out and get me going.

Somebody figured out that the best thing to do was run me up to Prestwick to try to catch that plane that was stopping off from . . . Frankfurt--to . . . hold me a space on that. And so, they did!

Q: Of course, this was not the day of jet flight.

Davis: No, the old prop jobs...a long, long trip.

So, they finally got it done, but when I saw Colonel Plain, he was very much relieved that I had made it, because he had a commitment to have me at the White House the next day.

Q: Meanwhile, he had made up all the lists for guests and so on?

Davis

Davis: Oh, Knox/was there, the Personnel people, and my family had all come up with names in the meantime. Everything was laid on.

Q: How would you say that winning the Medal of Honor has affected your career? I'm sure that it must have had some

positive effects. Has it had any negative...has it affected it at all?

Davis: Well, you just have to say it has some positive effects. I can't recall anything negative about it. My attitude toward it is one of great humility. I fully recognize the efforts and sacrifices of those young Marines, those young troopers who put out, who did the job, made it possible. It wasn't totally my doings. But I don't know of any ill effects it might have had.

Q: I was thinking of several others in the Korean period who won the award, Carl Sitter, Reg Meyers, Bill Barber, who did not go much further, or didn't make general officer...

Davis: Well, what you're saying is that the medal itself isn't a guarantee, I agree with that. I certainly never had any thought that that would be a ^{guarantee} / or that I was supposed to get any special recognition. If it was to be my fate in the Marine Corps to go ahead, it was to be based on other things. Also I guess to some degree on the toss of the dice. If I had to look back and see wherein my movement along the trail was influenced, as much as in anything else, I think it was in my assignment pattern, and it was most unusual.

You know, I never served a tour on a base in the United States other than Quantico and Washington. Never down the coast, never at Camp Lejeune, Parris Island, Cherry Point; Barstow, Twentynine Palms, Barstow, Pendleton, San Diego, El Toro, Kaneohe, Hawaii. I've never served in any of these places for a tour. I've been there for a brief period but never served a tour. My career

pattern was Quantico, Washington, overseas. For the Washington experience, I've always said that every Marine should have a tour in Washington. Then I say also, if every Marine had a tour in Washington, I would not have had four. I had four or five tours in Quantico, and each one of those were very fruitful tours where every time the alarm was sounded to go to war, I was in the position to go and go quickly and go at the best time to participate in the important phases. . . .
 The Washington experience in the G-3 and the ^{G-1} / and the G-2 areas, and the intelligence experience in Europe where I really received in depth an appreciation for intelligence and what it meant stood me in good stead in Vietnam.

I knew all the sources of intelligence, and I knew the reliability of them in such a way that I could be completely bold and confident in what I was doing, what I was responding to and what credence I could give to things. A lot in my outlook and performance in Vietnam was because of my four years in the inner sanctums of the intelligence business.

Of course, ^{from} Quantico, you could go from a long study and exercise in the theories and ideas and the staff functioning right into a field unit headed for combat. It gave a great opportunity to exploit what had been learned and I think that this pattern of Quantico-Washington-troop units overseas was as much as anything else the thing that moved me along.

Q: Do you think that, as a Medal of Honor winner, a lot more was expected of you than, say, someone who had not been so awarded?

Davis: I don't know. I have no way of putting my finger on anything that would indicate that.

Q: You didn't get any different or better assignments because of that?

Davis: Not that I was aware of. Even with all my work in the personnel business, I was never aware that this was any criteria for any kind of assignment.

Q: Again, I was thinking of these other individuals and the assignments that they may have received.

Davis: Well, I don't think that you can call, Reg Meyers, for example, a failure. He had a great career and I was aware of outstanding performance. As you know, to select a brigadier general, you've got about 100 to 110 names, and five or six of those can make it/when you consider the ^{normally} in the zone, above the zone, and below the zone.

The percentage, sometimes as high as nine.

When you are working on those kind of odds, it's easy to get them down to 20, but I've been on boards when the process of getting from 20 down to 9 is ^{just} a question of briefing, rebriefing, voting, and arguing and voting and so on, and they are just almost equal. It's kind of a bounce of the ball to get 20 down to 9, and so, Meyers was in that category. And he would have made a fine general officer, but there are just so many spaces.

Q: What were the things that you were doing up in the Operations Section?

Davis: I went initially into Training. We were setting up all the training directives, the budgeting, the money, the training aids, management of the whole training effort. Then I moved up to the Operations and Training Section. Bill Jones was there but moved up to be the deputy G-3. I took over the Operations and Training Section and was there for the rest of the time.

Of course, in the Operations Section, you have / the tables of organization and the deployment of units, the operations and training training exercises, all the support necessary from the Washington level for both the FMF and non-FMF.

Q: How were the Korean experiences affecting the orientation of Marine Corps training?

Davis: Well, it was a transition. World War II was kind of a shoulder-to-shoulder move forward. You didn't dare let the Japanese find a space between units, because they were masters at exploiting it. You'd wind up with your backyard full of suicidal Japanese soldiers.

It was a shoulder-to-shoulder type of thing in World War II, heavily fortified areas, and so forth.

In Korea, it was a war of maneuver on foot, and you had small unit the whole problem of communications. You didn't have any shoulder-to-shoulder operations. You were going after the key terrain all the time. You had to maintain control of high ground or you'd get shot. You had to gain access to passes through

the mountains, a war of maneuver. Application of fire support and concentrating fire support. Let me cast an aside here. At the time there was a big hue and cry about us running out of ammunition out there; but/ ^{the shortage} was almost by design. There was a feeling in the high command (Van Fleet was there) at the time, that you could (if you shot enough artillery) you could keep the Chinese from collecting themselves for their offensives. So, we put our tanks up on ramps so that they could become long-range artillery. Our artillery expenditure was controlled by saying that each artillery tube had to expend a minimum number of rounds every 24 hours, some large number, where they were just shooting all the time. You couldn't sleep at night because they would pop, pop, pop all around you and, worse, you couldn't get it called off long enough to send a patrol out there to be sure that there was nothing there to threaten/ ^{you. When} we tried to send patrols out the artillery was up in arms because they had to get these number of rounds out by dictate of the high command. And yet, our patrols would go out and there wouldn't be anything there except a few mad farmers who were trying to get their crops. So, that's how we ran out of artillery, on this misconception of the way to screen yourself by popping away with artillery all the time.

Where were we?

Q: We were discussing your tour in Operations and Training at Headquarters.

Davis: The difference between Korea and World War II, I think that

that was primarily it. In World War II, you know, they developed to a fine science concentration of artillery. They'd get just dozens of batteries of artillery firing TOTs and so forth, a total massing of everything. In Korea, you had less of that because your units were farther away and it became difficult to mass that much artillery.

Similar developments in close air support, as World War II developed. This development was in Korea exploited/so that we'd have better close air support, better communications, more a war of maneuver and flexible fire power. Then Vietnam was a step beyond that, of course.

Q: This was reflected in the changing of the training syllabuses in the Schools?

Davis: Yes. That went on / during the Korean war. Of course, we went back to World War II at the end when they began the peace negotiations, got in fixed positions. We had the Chinese digging in and us digging in and fighting back and forth over a heavily defended area. We got back into some of the World War II actions and some very heavy casualties. That last year of the war out there was a very bloody one.

Q: I was out there in '52-'53, when we began running amphibious landings on the west coast of Korea below Inchon, and there has been some comment made that, for a large segment of the Marine Corps, which had come in at the beginning of Korea, until some time after, it had no experience in amphibious warfare, amphibious landings or amphibious training, and there was a great concerted effort on the part of the Marine Corps to reorient, to get back

into the amphibious business. Is this true? Is this something that you had to be concerned about up in Headquarters?

Davis: Oh yes. Our training directives reflected that as I recall, ^{but} not specifically in those terms. We always moved back, in between wars, to reestablish our capability as the most ready force, leaning on our ability to work with the Navy as a world-wide ready force from the sea. Also there were efforts in the area of air lift in conjunction with that.

Q: Now, while you were at Headquarters you were selected and promoted to colonel.

Davis: Yes.

Q: But no deep selection at that time. And from there you went down to Senior School. Were there many colonels in that Senior School class?

Davis: I can't recall. I stayed there for a while. I had an interesting side trip on the way down there: going ^{for an} to Norfolk for six weeks / Atomic Weapons Employment Course.

Q: Down at Norfolk?

Davis: I was a student ^{at} the Navy school ^{and} got a deep exposure in the nuclear weapons business.

Q: Was that in lieu of the course out at Sandia?

Davis: Yes. I had been to Sandia two or three times, just for a short brush, refreshers, but this was the in-depth course in employment. Probably the reason that happened was that we

were going to upgrade the atomic weapons instruction at Quantico, and I was aware of this from my desk in Washington. There was a time delay between my relief/and start of the/School and it was in HQMO Senior in order just natural for me to go down there and get exposed/to help install it in Quantico.

Q: So after your tour as a student, you were slated to become the Assistant Director and then the Director.

Davis: I can't remember precisely. I think that was part of the reason they sent me to Norfolk. Also I was available and the course was there, it appeared to be worthwhile for helping to develop the instruction in Quantico; extensive atomic instruction with a Marine Corps flavor.

Q: What was the emphasis in the curriculum at Senior School at this time?

Davis: Well, it was staff and command in general. It was very broad. The whole level of training--lieutenant colonels and colonels, broad assignments in the Marine Corps. Division staff, regimental command.

Q: Well, wasn't the period after World War II until Korea reliving World War II at the Schools?

Davis: Not really. You know, the development of the helicopter concept came along. We had nuclear weapons to involve ourselves in. All this started, even when I was over in

the Junior School in '46, we had the development of the helicopter concept and nuclear weapons, and so on.

Q: Going back to '46 and your time down there, this unification fight, were you aware of it?

Davis: Just aware of it. I had a close friend and classmate, Hunter Hurst, who was in it right up to his knees, so I was generally aware of it.

Q: There was nothing that you could do or were called upon to do?

Davis: No. We were completely outside the action.

Q: Of course, the period of the late '40s was very severe and very drastic. Were you feeling that?

Davis: That cutback?

Q: Yes.

Davis: Yes. Out at Guam, you know, they cut our strength way back and made our units a part of a division on the west coast. It was a very difficult time because you can't split off a brigade out of a division and not add some pieces; some pieces in a division won't split into two parts. That's what they were trying to do, so it was a very tough time making ends meet.

Q: General Erskine had the division at that time. Did he come out to Guam at all to visit you?

Davis: Seems to me he was out there but I can't remember for sure. I went back to the west coast with General Craig for a maneuver and saw Erskine at that time. I just can't remember if he came to Guam or not.

Q: Now was there anything during this tour at Quantico that you remember as being outstanding? Were you involved with the advanced base problem at all?

Davis: We had people on it. And we were involved in helping to develop a new one while they were running the old one. We would help prepare the concept and scenario. So, we were always involved in the development of it.

I guess the outstanding thing that happened while Nickerson was director and then as I was director was the development of a conference type instruction. We went down into the basement of Breckinridge Hall and built twelve or fourteen small rooms and special oval-shaped tables. Jerry Thomas was there. He and Nickerson were the ones who developed the idea that we should go towards.

Q: Seminars?

Davis: . . . seminar type instruction. Well seminar was a bad word. It was more conference type in strict definitions.

We were initially under pressure to develop as near a course of total

/conference or seminar type instruction as we could. And this took some doing because there was a general resistance to it by some. It's easier, really, to

give a lecture then it is to develop twelve or fourteen instructors who can take a very carefully prepared piece and involve the students in discussing it. But it was--I thought--a most effective and fine effort. It was highly structured in that each student group--and we'd change these groups every month or so--each student group would have two or three infantry officers, a couple artillery officers, tank officers, supply, logistics-- across the board plus an allied officer and an Army officer^{or} a Navy officer.

It was a total mix. And these were officers with long experience: colonels and lieutenant colonels, who had 16, 20 years in the Marine Corps, who would sit down with one of these instructional pieces and an instructor who--and this

was the weakest part of it--the instructor was not really a total expert. But there was in the group as much expertise as you could gather together in the Marine Corps, and it was an opportunity for the real experts in whatever was being taught to help sell and convince the whole group on the ideas that we were promoting. It was very carefully structured in the preparation of material. The material packaged was well researched and documented in a form where these experienced instructors--even though it wasn't his specialty--could sit down and lead the group through this instruction.

The reactions to it in the main by the students was just outstanding. They were totally sold on it. The thing that hurt it most--and it didn't survive in the form that we developed it--the thing that hurt it most was that that first year we overdid it. Next year we backed^{off}/from an 1100 hour syllabus to a total of seven or eight hundred hours in these rooms.

There were obviously some courses that were better done otherwise. The next year we cut it back to 500 hours, which was about right, I believe. But this thing had such a fine reputation, we were getting visits from Leavenworth and Benning--all over. People were coming back to see it. In fact, the Army followed suit in some of their instruction. But, that first year when we overdid it pretty much killed it, because some of those courses that didn't produce very much got to be the ones that people talked about.

So when General Krulak came back to take over the Ed Center he came pretty much with instructions--I was told by one of his staff one day--

from General Twining to go back there and "straighten out that mess in the basement of Breckinridge Hall." (chuckles) So when he arrived we were faced with this kind of an idea: Just "Get rid of that mess." Without even knowing what the mess was, really. But he had his orders. So they went to work on it.

There wasn't that much work to do because, as I say, we recognized immediately that we had three or four hundred more hours transformed into this type instruction than we should have, and we had corrected it. So the correction had already been made. Still they just totally disagreed with the concept and pretty much killed it.

Q: Well you spent considerable time at Quantico as a student and instructor after World War II, Korea; and you went back as director of the Ed Center and then commanding general of the schools or MCDEC as it was. And I'm sure you're well aware: You just recited one of the problems, one of the paroxysms that changes at the Senior School particularly went through. And I'm sure you're aware of considerable criticism, the attitudes about the schools themselves that, number one, they try to be more than they are and they can't quite make what they should be; that it's--for instance Senior School or the Command and Staff college^{is} supposedly comparable to a top-level school but it doesn't quite make it. There's been some resistance on the part of other services: their attitudes toward it, the Army in some cases has never sent it's top notch people there; this thing. Then again the studies that have been made by outside scholars. I think Hal Hatch--no;

was it Hal Hatch? Hal...oh, the reserve general...

Davis: Chase, of Minnesota.

Q: Yes, Hal Chase was down there. Then someone outside...General Greene sent someone down there. All these various...

Davis: Well, see, we had an advisory group. We had these senior educator who had some connection with the Marine Corps Reserve, about a dozen of them would come there frequently.

Q: The adjunct faculty?

Davis: Yes.

Q: And I think you may have seen the article recently in the Gazette by Allen Millett and, I've forgotten who the co-author was, detailing what went on. What is your philosophy? What should...

Davis: Well, certainly there should be changes. One of my pet hates throughout my time in the Marine Corps was the effects so often of just change for change's sake. I've seen what appeared from every angle that you could look at, that here was an idea for change that really resulted in nothing except a change. I always resisted that kind of thing, but it happened many times; and Quantico was subject to that. Quantico suffered, too, from attitudes in the Personnel Department considering assignments. One time, you know, you'd get assigned a group of really top-notch people, and this happened to all of our school assignments. The National War College went through this. We had some National War

College classes where the Marines attending were just people that they couldn't think of anything else to do with. And that happened at Quantico: We had classes of outstanding students where it was a determined effort on the part of the assigners in Washington to get our best people to go to these schools. And then another time, just people who happened to be in the pipeline or. . . .

Q: Well I can recall regarding this--pardon me for interrupting--I can recall, for instance, right after Korea that the planners at Washington--personnel--determined a career plan, and that at a certain point in your career as a company grade officer, a field grade officer, you would attend Junior School or Senior School. And that was a quid pro quo for a successful career and that people were clamoring to get to these schools. It was almost like a career requirement to write an article for the Gazette to get it in publication. And you indicate that fell off, too; and the fall-off had to reflect what was being experienced at the schools.

Davis: Well I think a prerequisite to going to any schools should be a good performance elsewhere. I don't think we should use Quantico to try to pick up some guy who hasn't performed nor do I think we should let ^{passed over} people go there--and this causes some concern at times--they find a class at Quantico with a lot of passed over people in it.

You can't avoid some of that because the selection board met, you know, when the class was in session and there's no way of avoiding it. But it

should be a select process in that the high performers should be the ones to go to school; we shouldn't use the school to try to pick up people who are about to fall off the sled.

Q: But the school would have to have something for these high performers.

Davis: Yes. Well see, that was our point in going to the conference instruction. And this was one of my bitter disappointments that it didn't take. When you get people with 16 to 20 years experience in the Marine Corps and two wars under their belt, I / believe that they can sit down and help solve problems and contribute to a discussion in a meaningful way and educate one another as opposed to having an instructor stand up on the platform and talk to them. I just think there was a great loss to our total development as Marine officers in tearing down that system. Unfortunate.

Q: Well do you think, for instance, that the curriculum and the aim of the schools at MCDEC, they should, of course, provide a professional experience, professional training for Marine officers. But also, what about this concept of a collateral advance degree much like the Naval War College or. .

Davis: No; I thought that was largely a wasted effort on the basis that you only have so much time there, and the course should be designed so it's a maximum effort; there shouldn't be any loose time in the schedule so the guy can get a master's degree on the side.

Ideally, through the school system we should present all officers with an opportunity for an adequate education. It should be either through attendance at the resident schools or through correspondence or a combination of both. There should be an opportunity for any officer who wants to get an education to get exposure to those schools. The military business is so complex that you can't find out how to do it all in a unit or in a barracks or working in a job. You can't train yourself on the job to be the kind of officer it takes to run the military business. You've got to have these schools. So I think it should be available to all.

But back to my other point that the primary assignment to the resident schools should be to those best qualified because that's where we develop our concepts, that's where we examine, really, examine our application. . . .

End Side 2, Tape 4

Begin Side 1, Tape 5

Q: Well, the same thing you said about the students applies equally to the choice of instructors.

Davis: Oh, yes. The instructors have to be top quality and they have to be people totally experienced in their specialty.

They have to have continuity--they have to stay there long enough to get through two or three classes. And their relief has to come on board and try to gain/^{from}the experience of the one being relieved. It / a special assignment problem at Quantico schools if they're going to do what they're supposed to do.

That is, give that extra effort and the extra capability to senior Marine officers ^{we can} so/excel and pave the way for all the armed forces in the world.

Q: Of course as you are well aware, with the exception of-- I won't say what the numbers were or what proportion, and perhaps this is a generalization--you had the attitude very often of a lot of officers, a number of officers, that it was a kiss of death to be assigned as an instructor; that they couldn't wait to get out, leave Quantico. What you needed was a very dedicated, professional instructor type, the man who really liked doing this type of thing; who saw the benefits, who saw the need for it in the Marine Corps. And given the general type of assignments, the attitude that no Marine is really a specialist...

Davis: I didn't run into people who considered it a bad assignment, as I recall. I think at times we would have people there who weren't as well qualified in their career experience, particularly in the Senior School.

There should be available in the Senior School instructors who've done their broad duties and are totally experienced in what they're trying to teach. And a great part of our effort there (John Chaisson, I guess, was one of the highlights of the charm school) was the fact that you could take an experienced officer and work with him and make an instructor out of him. We had very few total failures--people just couldn't hack it as teachers and instructors. We worked with them and worked through the efforts of Chaisson and a number of others in our tactical inspection.

We had a great advantage in the military schools which some of our civilian counterparts are envious of but afraid of; and ~~that~~ is, an ability to monitor the instructor and the instruction, a command and control of it that you don't have in a educational institution outside.

Q: As a parent I can (chuckles). . . .

Davis: Yes. I've known some of the college professors who came to Quantico, and were amused, astonished, and alarmed about how we were managing the instruction and the instructor as opposed to--as they say--"when I walk in that door with my class and close the door, no dean or anybody else had better ever stick his head in there to see what I'm doing because that's an invasion of the academic freedom." And as a result, the college students many times suffer from that. I think our educational institutions could gain from some monitoring of the instruction and the abilities of the instructors to teach. And as you know, our students grade the instructors. A poor instructor is not going to hack it in our schools. The students are going to be after/ ^{them} the faculty is going to be after them, administrators are going to be after them. He's either got to hack it or he's ^{going} / to get knifed out of there.

Q: Well this was the end of--October '57 was the end of the tour at Senior School. Of course you felt the influence of both the Twining and Thomas administrations at the schools, both brilliant innovative men. What are some of the innovations beside . . . you had mentioned the seminar or the

conference type. When you took over later as the director of the Ed Center and then commander of MCDEC, did you try to reintroduce this or some form of it? Or had it so changed that it was very much to what you had envisioned when you were there as director of the Senior School?

Davis: No. (pause) We had so many things going on when I came back. What year was that now, precisely?

Q: Well '69.

Davis: Yes. '69 I came . . .

Q: May of '69.

Davis: . . . back from Vietnam. The whole effort then, the you know, was supporting/Vietnam effort and getting people ready. The educational system and everything was coordinated in that, and that's where the time was spent.

also
A response/to some of General Chapman's forward movement in terms of a development of a staff NCO school--professional school there, a physical fitness academy and upgrading the physical fitness; and there were so many things like that going on. Plus the pressure was getting the Basic School students really combat ready before they left. These kind of things consumed the time. I really didn't back off and try to reinsert. . . .

Q: Well we'll talk about that when. . . . I'm getting ahead of myself.

Your next assignment was assistant G-2 at Headquarters in October '57. Who was the G-2 at the time?

Davis: Jim Masters.

Q: Oh, that was your first relationship with him.

Now G-2 at Headquarters Marine Corps, given the functions of Headquarters, sort of an incongruous staff position as is G-3. The Commandant is not a commander of troops.

Davis: Well he is in that he's responsible for the total readiness of the Marine Corps and the organization, equipment, training--he is. It's in the operational areas where you can say he's not commanding.

Q: Well then, what were the function really, of G-2 at Headquarters?

Davis: Well it was in those things/ organization, equipment, training of people in the intelligence business throughout the Marine Corps. One of my early jobs was to chair a very broad-based committee of experts on the development of a Marine Corps doctrine for communications and electronic intelligence. It was very closely held behind locked doors in an effort to get us in/COMINT and ELINT, so we'd have a capability of working in those areas effectively in our field forces.

The reconnaissance area, the reconnaissance units, air and ground reconnaissance. Secondly, in effect was the collection of all the intelligence that flowed through there by the carload and extracting out of that those things which should be reflected in the Marine Corps. Plus keeping the Commandant briefed in general terms on the situation around the world, oriented particularly to Marine Corps missions and requirements.

We had a fairly large staff and a busy time, much of it buried under the tight security of going through three locked doors and knowing the password to get back there and see what was going on.

Q: Of course, I'm sure that you are aware that up until the World War II period, and even into the war, odds and sods would be assigned to G-2. Various people have commented on that, that people who couldn't hack it anywhere else were assigned to intelligence and as a result commanders weren't very much likely to rely on what the G-2s or S-2s or R-2s said, and it really wasn't until after the beginning of the war when reserve officers, lawyers, academicians came on and demonstrated what...demonstrated the validity of good intelligence work that commanders were willing to accept what was produced. Now, did it go back after World War II to what it had been, a lack of professionalism in the intelligence ranks?

Davis: ^{it changed with} There was a period there. But I think/the assignment of Jim Masters to the job, one of the real fair-haired brigadiers at the time, who was very close to the people in the head house, and very well respected by all. When I arrived, I recognized that this was not a bad place to be because Jim Masters was in the main stream. The longer that I was there the more I was immersed in the total effort of the intelligence game. I became convinced that at any time we downgrade that effort, we're suffering and hurting because with an adequate intelligence effort you can save many tactical troop formations and many casualties. Much success is paved on the road of good intelligence, as I found in Vietnam. I would have

deliberately
 been much more reluctant to/launch some of those wide-spread,
 very bold operations if I had not been immersed deeply in the
 intelligence business.

Q: Then it took until '57 or whenever Jim Masters took over
 as G-2 for the Marine Corps to reorient its attitude regarding
 intelligence?

Davis: I'm not sure whether in the interim period there were
 flashes of that or not. I'm not aware of any.

Q: When you went to the G-2 Division in Headquarters, was there
 a reorientation or any innovative thinking regarding making
 offices and enlisted professional intelligence people?

Davis: Yes, we had some. We had to have some in some
 of these inner sanctum areas. We had to have some specialists,
 but Jimmy Masters was able to collect up people like Carl
 Hoffman and others, who had broad experience, great
 expertise and exceptional capabilities and could trans-
 late this intelligence effort into a broader base, into an
 attractive effort where people came to appreciate
 it more.

It's one thing to have an expert who's totally immersed
 in intelligence and doesn't know anything else and have him
 present proposals as opposed to having a broad-gauged guy like
 Jim Masters come in and appraise the thing and go to his peers
 and superiors and tell them what ^{needs} /to be done. They accept the
 broad-gauged guy's views more than those of one who's
 totally immersed in it. The former/ ^{is} gauging it against other

But things. / you need a combination of both. You've got to have the technicians who can operate an effective intelligence program, and the intelligence people are just flooded with so much information that it takes a high-powered fellow to put it all together. If you don't have a high-powered fellow in there who knows what he's doing, he can get completely off the track. He can go into intelligence briefings where they've decided that one source of information is better than another and everything you're fed is out of this one source. It might well be invalid and inaccurate and can lead you astray. You need somebody who can take the total ^{of} / sources and put it together and structure and organize it so he can get trends as opposed to just shooting at everything that pops up. You look for the trends and the main efforts and the main threats.

The intelligence ^{expert} / can then become invaluable to the commander.

Q: In the scheme of things, in a high-level area, the Marine Corps has never been and isn't a producer of intelligence. It's a processor. On a lower level, it's a little different, in a combat situation. So, for that reason, with the exception of its applicability to training, administrative matters, the G-2 function at Headquarters is, I won't say incongruous, it didn't have at one time and perhaps still doesn't have as much weight, say, as the G-3, G-4, or G-1, and I think that that perhaps applies even on the division staff level at one time.

Davis: Certainly that's true, there's no question about it, but an overdoing of that can be very detrimental. The G-3's problems are multiplied if he kills off the golden goose that he has

available in his intelligence shop. Some of them are prone to do so. As I say, you can save resources, lives, and everything else if you're attentive to your intelligence business. Everything else hinges on that. Otherwise, you're in the position of a massive/employer. You cannot have an economy of effort force operation, which is the only kind of operation you can afford to have, really, without good intelligence.

Q: Your next assignment in August of 1959 was to the National War College. Had you requested this?

Davis: Yes, I wanted to go and Jim Masters helped me to go even though my tour was shortened in his shop--a thing he did for me, which I most appreciated. I'd come in a very short time to recognize the great qualities of "Gentleman Jim," "Tiger Jim," a really fine man.

Q: Where did you go on your foreign tour and what was the title of your student paper at the National War College?

Davis: I wrote about abuses in the centralization of authority. I made a study of General Motors versus the Pentagon and mine was an attack on the centralization of authority. It was not a very popular paper, but I believed sincerely in it.

My trip was to Africa, and that, to me, was a great, great gain. The choices were Asia, Europe, Middle East, and South America, and my trip to Africa. I made an effort to make it my first choice, primarily because I could foresee no other opportunity to go that route. We flew into Dakar on the east coast, down to Luanda, Angola, South Africa, and back up to

Salisbury, Kenya, Ethiopia, Morocco -- a once in a lifetime opportunity for me to become exposed to that part of the world.

That's the reason I was anxious to go.

Q: Who were some of your classmates at the National War College who came into prominence later?

Davis: Ours was one of those high-point classes.

At the National War College, as I mentioned before, there were times when they'd just send people over there who wouldn't fit in anywhere else. Our's was one of those classes when they decided to upgrade the students, and as a result, out of seven, six of them became general officers.

Q: These were Marines?

Davis: Yes. Lew Walt, McCutcheon, Metzger, who were some of the others? Gordon Gayle. I think seven, and six of them moved ahead, so we got three four-star generals out of them.

Q: How about the other services?

Davis: Well, classmates were the present Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Jones; Kerwin, who is the present Vice Chief of Staff of the Army. Yes, any number...Bill Rosson, just any number of top-flight Army. I'm trying to think of some four-star admirals who were there. None come to mind right off. They were real top-flight people, and it was a fine exposure period. I've bumped into them all along the trail ever since.

Q: This was one of the dividends, actually, wasn't it?

Davis: Yes, it was a great dividend. That experience. Not for one, only those in the class, but those who came...Kissinger,/came to lecture and to participate in the seminars.

Q: Were you impressed with him?

Davis: Yes, very much. Very Much, His book had been recently published. You get to the podium a lot of in the National War College the voices of/outside, people like Kissinger who are outside the main stream, but who are about to come on the line in a few years./from all walks of life, from the colleges, from business, the government, politics. We had the top-flight people from throughout the whole structure of our society come there to lecture and expose themselves to student discussions.

Q: That's a real high-powered school and leads to higher assignments like your assignment to CinCEUR.

Davis: Yes.

Q: Had you expected this?

Davis: Going to CinCEUR?

Q: Yes.

Davis: No, not really. I hadn't really considered it. It was one of those things I would have liked to do. You know, very few Marines, get to Europe with their families for a assignments, tour--relatively few. They are very attractive/ and I guess the only way I could go would be in the intelligence business, probably fostered by Jim Masters to help me get that. However, I

don't recall any particular steps or efforts to get the assignment.

Q: How did the family take the news of this assignment?

Davis: Oh, great. My family ^{members} / are great supporters of the Marine Corps and great tourists and travelers. We had a great tour over there. My kids traveled around. Just one example, there was an opportunity to get on the local train outside of Paris with a bicycle, with a pack on their back; go downtown and get on a train to Rotterdam with their bicycles; ride around Holland on bicycle trails for a week, living off the pack on their bicycles. They'd always get in a hotel for one night so they could take a bath before they came back home at the end of the week. That round trip cost \$11 on the train with the bicycle, and a lot of kids did it.

Davis to
Knox/traveled with other wives /Berlin, for example, together.
with a group. When I could get off, we all traveled/ We went by car, airplane, by train, to Vienna, Oslo, Naples, Madrid.

A great three years for the family to travel, and I enjoyed the duty.

I was the chief of intelligence analysis for CinCEUR and had some highly talented specialists from all services, plus some brilliant civilians who had been over there for 15 or 20 years. We were right in the middle of the Berlin Crisis, the Middle East Crisis. Every crisis, you know, started at 5 o'clock Sunday morning in the intelligence shop, like dairyman's hours. You could have a great sense of accomplishment in working in a real crisis. A thing happened on my watch that President Carter should be well aware of when he talks about suspending

the testing of nuclear weapons, and so forth. You know we were completely duped by the Russians during a period of no testing. Those rascals saved up a massive effort. starting for one night / a very short period they ran a hundred massive tests. It completely shocked us and demonstrated the futility of making any kind of agreement with those people. They deliberately cheated and duped us on this whole effort. We couldn't believe / watching those explosions-- we were gigantic size, broad-based. A deliberate, prolonged effort on the part of the Russians and a total breach of our agreement with them. We couldn't believe it.

Q: Who was the CinCEUR at this time?

Davis: We started out with Palmer, and then...of course, when you say "CinCEUR," there's a dual hat over at SHAPE headquarters. The actual CinCEUR's over there, but I'm talking about the deputy. The deputy was Palmer. Norstad was the SACEUR-CinCEUR, both hats.

Q: What other Marines were over there on the staff at that time?

Davis: Connolly was the G-3...

Q: Odell "Tex" Connolly?

Davis: Yes, and for some reason I'm having a memory loss here. We talked about him yesterday. The / aviator who was my predecessor in the exercises in the Philippines.

Q: Oh, Condon?

Davis: Condon, yes. Condon and Connolly were the G-3s. People like Jess Ferrill were down in the 3 shop. There were 15 or 20 Marines around. Bruce Cheever, a Basic School classmate of mine, who got out of the Marine Corps, was the CIA chief in Europe. This was another relationship which I enjoyed because we were deeply in bed with the CIA in my business

Having Bruce Cheever as a close friend and classmate made entries into his system easy and profitable.

Q: This was a high-level staff for a senior Marine colonel to be on. You probably had responsibilities and authorization which were much greater, say, than ^{you'd have} in a division or even on the Fleet Marine Force level, were they not?

Davis: There is no question. It was a very broad...USCinCEUR from Europe was charged with everything to Pakistan, all the Middle East in terms of military assistance, plus he was in charge of Berlin. of the The whole Army-Navy-Air Force in Europe, everything...a massive command and responsibility, and the intelligence part of it was all out. The whole nuclear program, the satellite program, everything was involved.

Q: Were you related to SACLANT?

Davis: Oh yes, it was part of the total effort, communications and contact, all the CinCs and SACs...

Q: But you were out of the Marine Corps stream, in a sense.

Davis: Yes, there's no question about that. We had Marine forces in the contingency plans. Tasking them was part of our

effort, to ensure that the plans were upgraded, where possible, and sustained and supported.

Q: This was a good tour, then.

Davis: Oh, yes, yes. I would not have missed it for anything.

Q: When you were there, you had already been selected for BG.

Davis: Yes, at the tail end. I was promoted on the ship coming home. The United States. It was near the end of the voyages of the United States. We went over on one of the transports, MSTs, which was a long, slow voyage. It was good for the family. We enjoyed it. We got off in England and had two or three days running around the/ ^{country;} then we went to Bremerhaven and rode a train down to Paris.

Coming back on the United States, it had a different flavor. You got on board and almost before you could unpack, you were home.

Q: You made major general almost immediately, didn't you?

Davis: No, not until '66.

Q: What were your anticipations regarding selection for a star?

Davis: Well, somehow, this was never one of those things that I really concentrated on and worked at. I was never one to ^{ask} try to measure my chances or/"Do I need to do this or do that?" Those kind of things just never occurred to me. My effort was to perform. To me, the task at hand was always a challenge. To upgrade it, to take care of it on the basis that my

reward in everything was a sense of accomplishment. In fact, if I couldn't accomplish anything, then I was frustrated. So, I worked hard and concentrated on my effort at what I could do to accomplish most in the job at hand in the time available.

I knew what the chances were. With those chances, you just wait for the ball to bounce.

Q: So, you had a good career up to this point, and this was frosting on the cake.

Davis: That's what it is. Before leaving this: I couldn't look back anywhere and say to myself, "Well, I wished that I had done this or I had done that so my chances would have been better." I hadn't left any stones unturned as I went along that I was regretful of.

Q: Well, you had a good career pattern and...

Davis: Good associations, I had certainly been exposed to the best people around and if you can't make it after that, after the exposure I'd had, that's just the way ball bounces.

Q: And you hadn't blotted your book at any point, either.

Davis: No, I didn't know of anyplace where I might have done that. I was never slapped too hard. I'd had some confrontations, but I'd had many champions on my side during those periods.

Q: For a period of three months, July, August, September, /you were involved with Marine Corps matters at Headquarters Marine Corps. What was that about?

Davis: I was on selection boards at that time, as I recall.

Q: Maybe they were briefings for your assignment to the 3d

Division.

Davis: I'm trying to recall if there's anything special about that period. As I remember, those were selection boards. I certainly would have remembered if there was anything special about that period. As I recall, it was primarily selection boards.

Q: Had you known before you left Europe that you were going to go out to Okinawa?

Davis: I think so. Yes, I think that I was alerted to that and prepared to leave my family when I got back and head on out.

Q: Apparently Jim Masters had asked for you.

Davis: I presume so. I don't recall specifically.

Q: And you relieved whom?

Davis: Bud Masters.

Q: That's right. I'm sorry; I asked you that last night. Going over Bud Masters' transcript, his primary concern was getting the logistics squared away in the division.

Davis: Yes, the was a follow-on of the problem of a GAO report.

Q: His brother had told him that this was his baby and considerable work had to be done. When you got out there, we talked about this also, you were sort of the field inspector, the infantry inspector. Readiness coordinator.

I think that we spoke about the posture and readiness of the

forces at that time. They had already gone through this Thailand business with General Simpson and were back. The condition of the division was good?

Davis: Yes. This was the hey-day of the unit rotation, as you recall...

Q: The Trans-Pac system.

Davis: Yes. We got battalions out there with Marines who would stay together. They would go through the routine of the jungle training in the northern training area, the training up in Mt. Fuji, where they would stay awhile, the training down in the Philippines, the afloat phase. We were really training professional, ready units, and when the war came in Vietnam, these were the kind of units we could apply.

Of course, the system was difficult in that it had to be broken down after we got in there, but initially, we were putting forces ashore in Vietnam that were these kind of professional, highly tuned team effort. Units with the experience of having been together. That's just invaluable. And I hope we go back to that, although there was a lot of misgivings during the early days of the Vietnam war because it had to be broken down. You had no way of rotating units after that. But it was good.

Q: It did work out?

Davis: Yes. It was great. In my view, the finest units anywhere in our history were those that went through that progression with all their troops together for the full period. There is no substitute for that kind of effort. And I hope that we go

back to it. We were using shipping, because, again, we were trying to keep the shipping viable and make use of it. But it would be even more effective with forth less pipeline cost if they go back and/by air. Just leave all the gear there and fly your troops out, in units.

The difficulty/ comes when they deploy. But /it's manageable because immediately, if it's a heavy combat deployment, you've got casualty and replacement problems.

But you do reach a point where you have to replace a lot of people at one time, when their time runs out. There has been a lot of discussion of the choice between unit replacement in combat and individual replacement. In all my experience, individual replacement seems to make most sense because your heaviest cause of casualties is lack of experience. An outfit that's been bloodied a couple of times has many, many people in key positions who've been through it. It's not going to happen to them again in the same way that it happened the first time. So when you're feeding individual replacements in, you're exposing them to the experience of the people who are already there, and this is less costly in casualties involved with the learning process than if you train a fresh rifle company and throw it in. It's got to go through this bleeding process before it can reach the expertise that it takes to save lives.

And on this basis alone, I would always opt for an individual replacement system as opposed to the unit replacement system.

Q: Well, of course, the unit replacement system, when the Marines

were pulling out of Vietnam, created all sorts of problems where you had to replace those units that were staying with the people who didn't have their time in...this caused all sorts of personnel problems.

Davis: This transfusion during the transfer process. Well, fortunately there wasn't too much war going on.

Q: But it created some individual hardships. There was a lack of coordinated effort with respect to assignments. I've heard some criticism of this.

Davis: I've not heard that.

Q: We spoke earlier, yesterday, about your tour as ADC of the 3d Division and collaterally CG of the 9th MEB. We spoke about the exercise and the contingency plans and planning and it looked as though Vietnam was the area that Marines would be committed in, if at all, in Southeast Asia.

Your next assignment was back to Headquarters as Assistant Director of Personnel to, let's see, the Director of Personnel at that time was...

Davis: Jeff Fields.

Q: Yes, I think he was, and then you were Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1. This was a four-year, nearly a four-year tour, from December of '64 to March of '68.

Davis: Was it that long? (laughs)

Q: Yes, it was. Let me make sure of that. (leafs through papers)
Yes, 42 months.

Davis: That was a long time.

Q: It sure was, 3½ years. I guess that your primary concern was supporting the Marine effort in Vietnam.

Davis: Yes. That was the thing that drove the whole effort, right down the line. When we started out with that effort, the Marine Corps was very short of general officer numbers, for example. We were very short compared to the other services. We were required to fill a lot of joint billets that bled off the available general officers and aggravated the shortage. It got resolved very quickly and very effectively on the basis of a single relationship.

I had become a close friend of an Air Force brigadier over at Defense Manpower. I'm ashamed to say that I've forgotten his name now, a very easy name. When this problem came up and General Chapman, as chief of staff, had waved his hand at me to see what I could do, I went over and sat down with my friend. In a relatively short time, taking the general guidance that I had as to what kind of spaces we were short, was able to get a document prepared there in his office, which upgraded the generals from 60 to 75.

Further, I got him to hand-walk it over to the OMD, get somebody he knew over there to nod to it, and get it over to the Congress. It happened so fast that I was somewhat embarrassed by it. I went back and told General Chapman what was going on. General Greene was away on a trip and before we could get him adequately briefed with all the back-up material to support the 75 and a change in the law,

Mr. Lemon over in the House set up a hearing.

He got the papers walked over to him in such a way that he set up a hearing and called for General Greene to come over and justify it. This happened before we could develop the details and get CMC adequately briefed.

Q: Who was this in the House?

Davis: Lemon, in the House of Representatives.

Q: Where was he a congressman from?

Davis: I don't know where he was from; I've forgotten, but he was the subcommittee chairman under Hebert.

Q: Was it Hebert or Rivers at this time?

Davis: I think Hebert. General Greene was a little provoked about this thing, you know. He's the kind of man who likes to go prepared, when he goes, and we were caught short. We ^{had} some rough charts and I ^{rode} / his limousine with him heading for Capitol Hill to testify, handing him a statement he had never seen before. I was aware enough of it myself so that I could sit there with him and point and assist in his testimony.

We got away with it and we got the spaces, but I don't think he ever quite forgave me for feeding him into that situation, and never quite understood how we could do that to him. But, that's how it happened. It went so much faster than I had anticipated, we ^{just} weren't ready for that kind of a response.

Q: In January 1967 we got 15 new brigadiers and major generals. Were you involved with getting the first four-star Assistant

Commandant billet?

Davis: No.

Q: Had General Walt already received his fourth star?

Davis: Yes, Lew had four stars when I relieved him. That happened while I was gone.

The other major part of the manpower problem, of course, was the money...going back to my earlier mention of the fact that the war was going. One example, \$11 billion needed for DOD add on, but we were going to get only \$1.7 billion. This meant that everything had to be gouged and cut to try to keep the cost down, and the major costs always is manpower. Manpower is expensive and we had a terrible time selling the needs for an adequate pipeline. We were committing the units; their support was essential. But we could not convince the bureaucrats in the Pentagon that we're going to have these number of casualties, this size pipeline, this training cost. Things that, in our view, we could well document. But the inexperienced civilian experts in charge were not convinced.

In fact, when Mr. Nitze was Secretary of the Navy, I sat across from him at one time and he questioned the casualty factors. I said, "Well, Mr. Secretary," and documented for him and in great detail how we arrived at them, and concluded, "That's the best estimate we can possibly come up with and we've got to stand on it. Those are the casualties that we anticipate." And he said, "Well, I'll accept that as your best advice, but I'll have to insert my authority as Secretary of the

Navy and say that we're going to cut that by 20%," and he did. He was under pressure from his boss, you know, to get this cost factor down. And that happened on all parts of it; the training base was chopped, the pipeline was chopped, the casualty figures were chopped, and that's the reason we had such a difficult time maintaining our strength at the end of the line.

Q: I've been told that because of this pipeline situation and because of the critical situation facing assignments, keeping up the foxhole strength in Vietnam, and so on, FMFPac took over certain responsibilities from Headquarters Marine Corps as far as assignments were concerned. Was this by virtue of General Krulak's superior...

Davis: Yes.

Q: Was this authority something that Headquarters should have given FMFPac? And exactly what was it?

Davis: Well, there was some lack of communication and some mismanagement involved, and some conflicts.

To manage this kind of manpower flow from a central authority, you've got to take your requirements in each of the skill areas and assign numbers to support the skill breakout at the end of the pipeline. This means that the whole training establishment, everything, the pipeline, everything is geared to the need for skills based on your estimate of turnover,

and this was being managed by the Personnel Department in Washington.

So, where the conflict really came to a head was the fact

that, to solve the shortage in the rifle units at the time, General Krulak would set up training programs and grab people out of the pipeline in one basic skill and transfer him over to another and retrain him. This never got reflected back into the central system. So, the Personnel Department was always over the barrel about this thing. Much of it was caused by FMFPac's tilting of the table on the way somewhere, but it got resolved.

I made a trip out there with an inspection team for six weeks to examine the whole thing and we came back with a raft of recommendations. The most serious problem that I had observed out there was the fact that in running manpower from FMFPac, there was a lack of communication between there and Walt's manpower folks. / It hurt to the degree that they could get ready to employ a battalion and suddenly find it stripped of all of its people by dictate from Hawaii. So, there was that kind of communications breakdown, but they got worked out.

I felt that there should have been a better manpower management team out in General Walt's headquarters and less back in Hawaii. It could have been better handled if Washington and Danang had the main effort with Hawaii doing more monitoring than managing. But, they seemed to get it done.

Q: You had two strong personalities out there that you were dealing with.

Davis: (laughs) Yes, yes. And I had some ideas of my own, too.

Q: Were you able to get them through?

Davis: I think so. I think, in the main, we...we could never

fully solve the manpower problem, and whether it's better now or not, I don't know. The thing it really needed, and the thing we really worked hard for (General Chapman was an ideal man to have at the helm and a great proponent) was the entire mechanization of the system. Our records were just absolutely inadequate.

This is where Jaskilka played a major role, too. I brought him over to G-1 to help organize the computer business for manpower management. He got so good at it they assigned him in the computer services business and it got Sam a lot of favorable recognition. He deserves great credit and it certainly helped his cause. The main problem was a lack of total coordination between the G-1 manpower planners, who have to come up with the numbers and the dollars to support them, the implementation of the plan down in the Personnel Department. The training establishment and the field forces... the whole business is so complex that until we get it adequately computerized, we're never going to approach anything like a good system.

In the early days of the computer system, though, our big problem was in the "garbage in, garbage out" problem. We had a room full of "garbage" people, literally. As they opened the doors and started the hiring to get the punchcard room opened up, as I was told they hired the char force outside the door to come in and operate these things. So we had sometimes 30% error input into the system, and they couldn't figure out what the hell was wrong. Well, you can't

live with that kind of input error. So they made a big effort to move towards optics scanners and so forth, to get rid of this error input right there in the bowels of the effort.

Hopefully, some day, when

the 1st Sergeant makes his report on a printed form, there is no way but for an optic scanner to get that information into the system. And once they get the errors out of such a system, for the first time, I think, we'll have a viable, effective, efficient manpower system and it will save us millions and millions of dollars.

Q: Is it true that nobody can say at any one time, say right now, it's 1150 on the 3d of February, how many men...what the strength of the Marine Corps is?

Davis: I don't see how they could since there's 5 or 8% error in the system.

Q: Is this the pipeline?

Davis: Yes. People are in there twice, and some people are not in there. So, until we come to an audit and work that out and get it straightened out, there's no system with 190,000 people in it where you can say that you've got precisely so many people.

Q: How does that affect budget and other considerations?

Davis: Well, it hurts many times and hurt us because we were dealing with analysts who wouldn't appreciate the system weaknesses. They find you off a thousand here and a thousand there,

they just condemn your whole system and hack away at you in dollars. They always took the worst case that they could find to determine your dollars.

Q: It also had to affect the assignment of certain units for...

Davis: I don't/^{think}that it's a major problem in terms of effectiveness in a unit. I think that there were other things that caused us our major problems and, at my time there, that was the gross error in the system, the limited capabilities of machines to analyze...

End, Side 1, Tape 5

Begin, Side 2, Tape 5

Q: I guess that we've pretty much exhausted the G-1 business, and we had spoken yesterday regarding assignment to Vietnam, and I imagine that you'd anticipated, had been told that you were going out there.

Davis: I knew that I was due to go and I wanted to go and was happy that a place turned up so I could go. The billet for a deputy to ProvCorps came in, and gave me an opportunity.

Q: You'd kept pretty much abreast of what was going on out there, so there were no great surprises for you, I expect.

Davis: No, no. We were totally immersed in that whole problem. I'd been out there in '66, and spent six weeks and visited all the units, everywhere, been up to Khe Sanh, and everywhere else.

Q: Were there many changes from what you'd seen in '66 to the time you arrived in '68?

Davis: Yes, I think that everything changed with the Tet Offensive, that whole move of MACV (Forward) and everything.

Q: That's right. You got out there right after the Tet '68 Offensive.

Davis: The aftermath of it was still going on.

Q: Much shock?

Davis: Oh, yes, particularly in those areas where major inroads had been made by the Reds. There was a serious state of shock and it took a lot of redoing. Of course, President Thieu's move towards full mobilization of force, of his people...yes, the aftereffects of it were still evident in March.

Q: In your assessment of Tet '68, would you say that it was a defeat or setback for MACV? And that it was something that, with all of the sophisticated intelligence apparatus and intelligence agencies out there, it was something that should have been expected?

Davis: I don't recall in specific the details, but the general memory I have of the situation was that it was anticipated that a major onfall was due. A lot of tactical surprises here and there which there is really no way of avoiding. It was kind of a desperation suicidal effort on the part of the NVA and they were punished severely. Our forces, we held. There was no permanent loss of position anywhere. Some severe setbacks, but it really

resulted in more pluses on our side than on their's, because they had made their maximum effort and they fired and fell back. They failed, and on the otherhand, it welded together the will of the people of South Vietnam to get themselves collected and together and to do something to defend their country. So, that was the greatest plus imaginable on our side. It didn't get that treatment in the press. It was a total condemnation of our effort out there by the news media, and I don't think that we ever outlived it, I don't think we ever again were trusted and given credit for what we did.

And so, therefore, here at home it was a devastating--it had a devastating effect on us here in the United States. In Vietnam, to me it was all plus for the South Vietnamese, for the forces out there. We really got after them after that.

Q: Well, General Nickerson was telling me vis a vis this intelligence thing, there was never this perception on the part of the Americans of and an ability to act on what he called "fragile" intelligence. I guess what he meant by that was the perception of the fire team leader, the individual Marine on the ground to see by the raising of an eyebrow of the old Vietnamese man sitting in front of his hootch or something that something was amiss, being able to fathom the Asian mind, being able to react immediately to face to face situations.

Davis: Yes. Well, I think that that is a very valid point, particularly in the context, as I understood it, that he said it. We had some very disastrous patrol actions in

the villages where our people got in the middle of what they thought was a quiet, friendly atmosphere and all of a sudden were butchered. So that has to result from a failure of our people to appreciate what the Vietnamese were telling them.

this was not so

But, on the other hand, /in my operations up north, where we had again I guess the heaviest effort of the entire campaign.

(I don't know of anybody else that had five divisions to cope with in a short time or anybody else in a relatively few months was able to completely clean up an area to the degree that we did.) Of course we had the resources. It wasn't any great, brilliant scheme so much as it was availability of sources and application of them, and it was almost totally an exploitation of intelligence. You see, we had (I talk about this in some of the tapes) as I remember, about 60 recon teams organized and working together. One example, lance corporal, 19 years old, who had led something like 21 reconnaissance missions out in those mountains with his three Marines. And of these 60 teams (a point that I was obstinate about) we kept 20 to 30 teams on the ground at all times. Any time the intelligence section would come up at a briefing and say we had 18 teams on the ground, they had to answer for the cause of the breakdown. Coverage out coverage out there because I knew from the intelligence that there was enough activity out there for us to require 25 or 30 teams on the ground all the time checking it out.

We had a positive check. There was never a needle flicker in the sensor system that indicated activity that we didn't go out and find out what it was. We checked every

report from guys who straggled down out of the mountains and told the local chief of something. Maybe a porter who could describe what he was doing. We might send an air observer up to confirm, "yes, there's a high-speed trail there" or something like that. We never found any indication that looked the least bit real that we didn't put Marines out there to check it. And when they found it was true, we went out and did something about it. So, ^{it} was this exploitation of intelligence that made success possible.

Q: Did you handle your division staff differently than they would have been handled in any other war? Did this war call for any innovations in staff operations?

Davis: Well, I think so; certainly differently from other wars because it was a different war. Instead of having a regiment with a relatively small area to operate in, a ^{now} regiment/had hundreds of square miles, and I operated on the basis of broad mission as opposed to a day-to-day issuance of orders.

And the staff officers had to support that kind of an operation as opposed to one where you sit down every night and work out the specifics of the maneuver the next morning, assignments of boundaries and zones of operation, and detailed logistics. It was more a broad-mission type effort on the part of the regiments, so it didn't require the kind of detail that you sometimes have in a division staff.

Q: You were telling me at breakfast, we were discussing your son having been out there as a platoon leader with the 9th Marines, your concern about him, that situation there.

Davis: Well, I'll spend a minute on that. It was an interesting development that he got in my division. As you know, this was against the normal policy to have two members of a family in a division, but, I went out to the ProvCorps, Miles/^{Davis} was just finishing Basic School and had an assignment to the 3d Marine Division and I was not then in the 3d Marine Division. Then he got shuttled aside for awhile to go to Vietnamese language school, but was still assigned to the 3d Marine Division. ^{Soon} I got assigned to the division. So, he was really assigned to it before I was, even though I arrived there before he did. And as he was about to go out, of course, the people in Washington got aware of this assignment and it was against policy, as they well knew. But they had to have a request from one of us to make a change. They couldn't just arbitrarily change it. And so, Nickerson, who is a very dear friend and a great man in every respect, made a tactical error in calling my wife and getting her involved in the problem and decision (laughs). She just said, "You guys up there are just chicken. You're not doing your job. This is not a matter of decision for a mother and wife. This is a decision for men-folks and Miles is a grown guy; and if he wants to go, I'm going to put him on the airplane," and so off he came.

He arrived and I met him and took him into my hootch there at the headquarters to have a little chat with him. The first thing he confronted me with, "Well, now, Dad, I don't

want you interfering with my assignments and career and so forth," you know, telling the old man to stay out of his business. And then he changed, "But, I do want a rifle platoon," so we had a conversation about that and I told him that there was concern on the part of his mother about him coming out there and being in a rifle platoon and being in, both of us being over there at the same time--a kind of a double exposure for her and so forth. But I said, "I'm somewhat of a fatalist in these matters in that the system has assigned you to the 3d Division and circumstances have brought me to the 3d Division

The only way for that to be upset was for one of us to make a move, and I wasn't about to make a move because if I moved you, and then something happened to you, I'd feel that I had done it to you.

And," I said, "you've been slated for a rifle platoon, so I don't have to do anything about that, either," and off he went.

The worst day of this (this overlap was for about six months) when he had a rifle platoon out in the 9th Marines and was in a very active part of the war with Bob Barrow's high mobility operations. He had a great time on the trail with his troops, you know, like everyone else. I had two opportunities to go out and walk the trail with him in areas where not too much was going on and just enjoyed his company for an hour or two. But my longest day ^{started} / early one morning when K Company, 9th, where he was assigned, had a clash with the enemy. I had cryptic reports coming in, "K Company, fire fight, 1 killed, 2 wounded," An hour or so later another skirmish, one or two

killed and a few wounded, and this went on out in heavy fog. I was scheduled to be at Colonel Barrow's headquarters at 8 o'clock. I wanted to be right on time because this was where this message was coming from. I couldn't quite bring myself to call Barrow on the phone and ask him. I was just going to, again, let the thing go and hope.

I arrived to find a C-46 sitting in the place where I normally landed on my frequent visits--about every day if I could get in. So I landed over on the next finger and had to walk down through a little draw to get over to Barrow's headquarters. As I came up out of that draw near this 46 (it turned out to have been a crippled ship that put down there) the doors were open and coming out of it was my son Miles with his arm in a sling. He had been shot, obviously, but not seriously. That's the first time that I knew of his personal situation up there. His tale of the past few minutes of his life, though, was one that will always stay with us.

He was conducting his platoon in a fire fight and happened to hold out his hand to motion to somebody to do something, and he had been shot right through the fleshy part of his hand. He stayed there awhile and finished what he was doing. As things settled down, his corpsman told him he'd better have it taken care of because in the jungle you could get some very serious infections and lose a hand. So he called his company commander and was told to arrange for a chopper to pick him up. Well, they had to hoist him up on the string from below the trees, but as he reached the helicopter, the helicopter was hit by some kind of projectile--a rocket

round of some kind just as he had gotten his body inside. It hit some fuel lines and fuel was flying everywhere. Of course the pilot's reaction was to get the hell out of there where he had / been hovering over a cliff. So he threw the helicopter down, down this cliff, to get up speed to get away from there. So, (laughs) Miles said he was just terrified beyond belief because he was convinced that that chopper was headed for a crash down the side of the mountain. The helicopter was damaged; he pulled it up and flopped it down to just a few miles away in Barrow's CP. That was the chopper in my normal landing spot. Miles said he didn't realize how terrifying it could be-- that helicopter being hit as he was getting on board.

Q: Was he evacuated?

Davis: When I went back to division, I took him over to the hospital and got the thing checked on and straightened out. He had a few days, and this is the reason that I missed, that I was out of country when Winecoff's outfit went across the border. Because Miles was going to have a few weeks out of action--at a minimum a few days--and I was due for R and R, had been thinking in terms of grabbing a few days, so somebody in the Navy came by about that time and told about this little jet airplane that they could make available to fly people around. I got

a ride up to Hong Kong for three or four days, and I took Miles along. So we had a great time visiting and shopping and I had an opportunity to show him some of the sights and to visit with him. That was just ideal.

Q: The staff must have been aware of your concern...

Davis: Oh absolutely; at that time they were. Only because I told them not to, they weren't on the phone heckling Barrow. When you have a war going on, you don't want to disturb things by tying up everybody and everything checking every few hours to see if your guy's making it. I wouldn't let them interfere.

Q: Well, now, you served just about the normal tour out there of a year, 13 months...

Davis: Yes, almost precisely.

Q: Had you been told that you had been slated for the Education Center ahead of time?

Davis: I think just routinely I knew when I left that I would go there.

Q: Of course we've spoken about that to a certain degree. Was there anything outstanding, or was this a culmination would you say, since you had spent so much time at Quantico?

Davis: You see, as I mentioned previously, I had a great challenge about educating people on the high mobility concept. To me, this was a thing which was, in these circumstances, totally successful and in my view held much in the future of the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps could be the world-wide amphibious (or airlift or whatever)

readiness force with this high-mobility concept where

(as I said in some of my writings about the sea-based concept) they could go into situations world-wide.

With variations all the way from a four-man team for food relief up to the application of major forces from a sea base wherein you didn't have to wait for a logistic build-up. No requirement to insert heavy installations in the midst of a population.

The Marine Corps needs to move in the direction of the requirement and development of this high-mobility concept hopefully with a sea base. I was so enthused about this that it became my main theme, effort and concern--the development, selling and fostering of this concept in the Marines Corps. So that was my main effort at the Ed Center.

Q: Do you think that you got it through? Are you satisfied...

Davis: Oh, we made great progress. I'm not sure how much of a lasting imprint was made. I went to each class of the Basic School, each class of OCS, each summer class of reservists that would come into Quantico. ^{With} every one of them, I spent maybe up to three hours. Get them in a room, get my big maps and walk them through this experience in Vietnam in great detail, then discuss it with them for an hour or an hour and a half.

Q: Was there much of a colloquy between you and these students? Did you hear any adversary comments, criticism? Was it a frank letting down of the hair, or was it just sitting there and listening to the boss talk?

Davis: No, no. I would insist on being there long enough. You know, if you sit long enough in front of a bunch of bright, hard charging youngsters, they're going to ask you

hard questions, and that was my scheme. I exposed myself to them long enough where the questions would build up, and they covered everything. I don't think anybody was reluctant to ask questions. Also, I instituted, while there, this business of having each unit in Quantico select one or two lieutenants out of their organization to come with their wives to a session over in the library at Breckinridge Hall.

We would sit down, we'd have cookies and coffee, and it was very informal. I would present my general views of everything--we generally tried to confine the subject matter--and stand there and carry on a two or three hours discussion with them, provoking them and drawing them out. Later / we did it for the captains, and then for the majors. We had some complaints about not doing it for the lieutenant colonels, but we just didn't get around to it.

This was one of the origins (and they ran this in the Gazette) of exposing, of seeing people through key, select group of juniors. I think that the input from them, and a development of the total team and family effort is one of the keys to our continuing success as a Service.

(break for lunch)

Q: You were commenting on the situation in the field regarding beards, moustaches, drugs.

Davis: Yes, particularly in those units that were committed out in the field, out in the hinterlands of our division operations. There was no trouble at all with haircuts because the troops found pretty quickly that hair was a bother, so they just cut it

all off. It was just so much easier to manage, to keep clean. They had so little opportunity to work with their hair, so they cut it off. They had no trouble with that. Another view reinforced by my son, from his platoon, and a number of other junior officers and junior NCOs, ^{is} that there was no drug problem out in the hinterlands, because there was a self-policing of the troops themselves.

Their life depended on a clear head and they would just not permit anybody to smoke a marijuana cigarette or consume any drugs.

Q: Well, the drug and racial problems were mostly, occurred in the rear areas, anyway, is that not correct?

Davis: That seemed to be the fact.

Q: Did you have much, if any, of a racial or drug problem in the division? Fragging?

Davis: A couple of instances. It wasn't necessarily racial. We had a very fine lieutenant (in fact, at one time he was my son's company commander) who was killed by a couple of Marines. They said that they really didn't intend to kill him.

We had these company administrative rear CPs back in the Dong Ha combat base (some were down at Quang Tri). The company

CO had gone back to take care of some of his company administration, and in the process had discovered these two guys who had gotten on a helicopter up front and had come back. He rounded them up and set them up to go right back up to the company. Their response

to this that night was to throw a grenade into his hootch, and they killed him.

They were black, but it had nothing to do with race. It was a question of two Marines who were avoiding their duty and been caught at it trying to beat the rap. They took this violent way out.

We had one or two other actions like this, but none of the others that serious. They were isolated instances. I did have a doctor come to me and tell me that 85% of some units were smoking pot. Well, this happened to be a doctor who interviewed the people caught with drugs. It was his business to interview those caught, and they would say to him, "Well, I was just one of many. Everybody's doing it," you know, that kind of....He became convinced on this one unit that was positioned in an area where they had many bunkers. These bunkers were places where they'd go to smoke their pot. He became so convinced of this that I finally arranged with the surgeon to get him over there, let him live with it and check for himself. He came back convinced that it was an exaggeration, that it wasn't all that bad, that there were only a few drug abuses.

But, at that time, anyone caught with as much as a half inch of marijuana cigarette in their pocket was given a discharge from the Marine Corps. They were tried, convicted, and heaved out.

Q: Do you believe that the Marine Corps should have been that strict on the drug problem?

Davis: During my review of trials where there was no

other evidence except this very small piece of a cigarette, I let the conviction stand but recommended that he be given a year's probation and retained in the Marine Corps if he performed satisfactorily for a year.

Q: You didn't believe that the Marine Corps should have set up any sort of rehabilitation program, that this wasn't its function?

Davis: Well, generally I don't think so for this reason. If we're going to be truly an elite corps, we should be able to say to people, to parents, to everybody, "If you want your young son or daughter ^{they're} to be in an outfit where / not going to get into drugs, join the Marine Corps." We should be able to make statements that indicate that we are, in every respect, a different, totally elite corps, and that includes no drugs. We need to get rid of alcoholics, we need to get rid of the drug addicts, and we need to get rid of the Ku Klux Klan types, the Communist types, the black provokers. We should have some way of just getting those people out of our system. They came out of society, let society rehabilitate them.

Q: Well, we've had the black radicals, we've had the Ku Kluxers, and we've had the racists. Have we had Communists, too?

Davis: I couldn't say that we didn't have.

Q: You were discussing the seminars, the symposia that you had with the different ranks, officers and their wives, and it seems that nothing ever remains the same. The Marine Corps of the

'30 or the '40s are certainly not the Marine Corps of the '60s or '70s. On the other hand, the question of principle remains the same, the question of devotion to duty remains the same, the question of quality remains the same. We seem to have a different kind of Marine Corps today, and one in which some really fine officers are getting out of, and it seems to me that there is a real problem here. Could you see any of that in your discussions with these people, any doubts, you know...at one time, in a discussion with General Krulak, in answer to something I had said, he told me, "It all depends on how badly you want to be a Marine, Ben."

Davis: That's true. You have a situation where there are two approaches to the problem you find yourself in. One is to just exclude you from it. In other words, if you're not happy with the way the Marine Corps is--this is the point that I tried to make with these people--

you have two choices. Either get out or help change it, and the good ones, the people who are truly devoted, won't consider getting out of it. They are going to put their entire effort in making it better. This is what sustains us, really. Everybody is bound to have warts. There is no way of having a perfect Corps, but you've got to have your goal. Perfection is our goal, and anything short of perfection is not satisfactory. You've got to do something about it.

Q: When you say that some of these people, recognized fine young field grade officers are getting out, retiring, are making a mistake in not staying in...

Davis: Well, it depends upon definition. If they are really interested in an elite Marine Corps, if they really believe in what we are trying to do and accomplish and the importance of having this kind of Corps available for the United States, for the world to see, if they are really interested in that, then they've got to stay with it and help to build it and to sustain it. If their interest is elsewhere, I can't say that it's a mistake for them to go elsewhere. If their interest is elsewhere, they are not going to provide what we need.

Q: Of course, I don't know how close you are to current matters outside of what you may have read about the circumstances of that affair with the recruit who died out at San Diego and things going on at Parris Island, the problems in fulfilling recruiting quotas, and this Ku Klux Klan thing out at Camp Pendleton, but this has to have a serious effect, I'm sure, on the outlook, the morale of Marines both commissioned and enlisted.

Davis: Absolutely. I accept that, but at the same time I say again, it can have two effects on people. One, they want to get away from it, but those who are totally devoted to the cause, will stay with it and try to correct it. The guys that leave are less devoted to the cause the Marine Corps has
to
steadfastly held through the ages.

Q: Were you surprised when...what were the circumstances around which you discovered that you were to be the new Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps?

Davis: There was a most awful event that led to that, in

the illness of McCutcheon. General McCutcheon had been designated, and he suddenly found himself dying of cancer.

I went out to see him, and I just couldn't believe that Keith McCutcheon was not going to be able to serve. This had a dampening effect on the whole thing. I had no idea as to how I was selected. I certainly /could not have been selected without the support of General Chapman and Walt, and they were as close to me as anybody. Those two were bound to have made the decision. And I realized the opportunity and certainly the great break that it was for me. I thought that three stars were unbelievable and four could never happen.

Q: Well, certainly, you had to think in terms of what your career was, had been, was going to be, and having, even as a major general, been within the sweepstakes for Commandant, in the running, you were under consideration...

Davis: Yes, it's a pretty broad^{-based}/race all the time.

Q: And having three stars you were possibly that much closer to it. And all other things being equal, considering the records of the other general officers within the same framework, you had a pretty good chance. So you had to think in terms that possibly you might eventually be Commandant. And I'm also sure that--this is in '71--you had 33 years of active service and that you had to be thinking in terms of eventual retirement at the end of your tour at Quantico. What were your feelings on the matter?

Davis: Well, back to what I said before, it was never my nature

to sit around and review my aspirations towards promotion. I seemed to be consumed with the matters at hand most of the time. When I was MCDEC, I was trying to make that command the best possible, to solve all its problems, to work...just doing everything I could, because I seem to thrive on accomplishment. That's my main effort always, what can I get accomplished?

You can't say that these things don't cross your mind, because if they never cross your mind of your own volition, there are people talking to you about it.

There was always somebody who was interested in furthering my interest or promoting my interest.

You just can't be in the position that I was in among the senior group without somebody you've known along the way not coming around in some way ^{to} talk about this prospect and possibility.

Q: Of course, the Commandant sweepstakes are a matter of parochial interest to Marines, and not even to the whole Marine Corps. I'm sure that down amongst the snuffies they couldn't care less.

Davis: It just seems so far away and above them that they don't...there is no way that they can influence it.

Q: The Marine Corps had gone through a pretty bad time during General Chapman's selection. This business of Walt versus Krulak, this type of thing. I don't know whether...I'm sure that you were aware of it.

Davis: Yes, I was there.

Q: What were your duties and assignments as Assistant Commandant? It was no longer purely a ceremonial position, if, indeed, it had ever been.

Davis: I was in a position that I enjoyed. I had total trust and confidence of General Chapman. I had enough experience around headquarters to know what was going on and I enjoyed being out. I enjoyed being with the troops. That's the thing that I'm made of. That's me. I'm happy now, here, probably for the most part because I'm outdoors. When I arrived and talked at length with General Chapman about my duties and concerns, he readily agreed that I could spend a lot of time on the trail, so to speak. I was gone; I was out on with units /maneuvers, in the civilian community. In fact I have a list here (it came up in my job interviews when I retired) showing that I was in educational institutes throughout this country all the time, speaking to student groups, faculty groups, participating in exchanges with them, at all kinds of civic endeavors.

I was out helping to build and sustain the Marine Corps image on appearances, speeches, travels, visits, inspections, a great effort in this regard. At the same time, General Chapman was traveling a lot. When he was away, I had to be there taking his place in the JCS and DOD. As his term came to an end, he was gone more and more of the time, saying his good-and byes, I spent almost full time in the JCS and DOD arena/ testifying

over in the Congress.

Q: Actually, the position of the four-star Assistant Commandant was, in effect, to put another layer in the administrative level, whereas things that would have gone to the Chief of Staff and then to the Commandant now had to filter through the office of the Assistant Commandant.

Davis: As I understand it, that was the way that General Anderson worked it. That was not true in my case. You know, John Chaisson was one of the most competent individuals that I knew and the relationship between Chaisson and Chapman and Davis was such that there was no way that I was going to insert myself into the channel unduly. I tried to let Chaisson be the Chief of Staff and run the administration of the staff with the Commandant, acting Since I was/Commandant part of the time, he had to keep me informed, I had total trust and confidence in that brilliant guy to do/that. I was never inserted into the channel; you'd never find a pile of papers sitting on my desk waiting for me to OK them to go to the Commandant.

Q: So that was an Anderson-Cushman operation.

Davis: I understand that that was inserted by that regime. Of course, that explains one of the complaints that I heard about General Anderson from a number of field commanders that I knew closely and personally, and that is that they never saw him.

One time I heard, and I don't know the validity of this, that base commanders said that General Anderson had never visited their base. So, if he's in effect a super Chief of Staff

that explains why he couldn't get out of the headquarters.

In my case it was entirely different. Almost every minute that General Chapman was in the headquarters, I'd scheduled myself to be out. I felt that it's an obligation / ^{for} those two to be out with the troops, and with the public, and with...around the country and around the world as much as possible. Under that circumstance, there is no way for papers to go from the Chief of Staff to the Assistant Commandant to the Commandant because only one of them is there for the Chief of Staff to take papers to.

The relationship between the Commandant and the Assistant Commandant and the Chief of Staff, of course, is based upon personalities and from what we saw in Vietnam and from what I understand happened in Washington, later there was a very close cronyism relationship. That was Mr. Nixon's ^{had} problem. He/ cronyism across his staff in such a way that nobody'd raise the red flag when the damn train was about to jump the tracks.

Q: Getting back to MCDEC for a minute, when you left, did you feel that you accomplished everything that you wanted to accomplish? When you went there, did you have any preconceived notions of what you wanted to do?

Davis: No, I don't think that anybody could do that or even try to do that because you don't know what your starting point is until you get there. And certainly I had a bad experience on the other side when people came there to "straighten out the mess

in Breckinridge Hall"without even knowing what it was.

Q: Were you ever able to explain to Krulak what the situation was?

Davis: Well, he didn't have a free hand. He was working for General Twining, so there was nothing he could do about it except defend the positions. I'm sure that he'll recall he gave me a few lectures on some studies. It was made of a class of freshman in some school up east./Rensselaer Institute and a freshman class in metallurgy.

The "old professor" who lectured to a big group versus assistant professors who taught in smaller groups, and, of course, the old professor won. I'd tell him that that just didn't apply to what we were talking about. You're talking about a freshman class in a technical subject and we're talking about 16 or 18 year veterans in an area of discussion of concepts and theories.

We couldn't agree on that at all.

But he was under the directive to clean it out, so he couldn't take any excuse or understanding. That's the position we get ourselves into at times whether we want to or not.

Q: Twining was a very hard taskmaster to work for?

Davis: He was, and he generated some difficulties with his staff assignments. I don't know whether you are aware he put Jim Magee, who was a classmate of mine, as Chief of Staff and he selected his other staff people junior to Magee. It meant Navy / that with 80 colonels and/captains on the base at Quantico that in the 10 most junior ones were

all the key staff officers to General Twining. This led to trouble not only because the inversion in rank because of experience, I mean, these ^{were} /people/ ^{with} less experience, less horsepower, less everything than people they were trying to coordinate and instruct. Just the existence of this kind of inversion is going to lead to trouble from both sides. It's not necessarily those outside who want to resist it, although there were ^{some} /deep feelings about that in all of us. But the younger ones try to prove their point, they try to establish themselves in a superior position with some of the outward appearances. This led to a pretty bad time there at Quantico for a time. And it probably cost General Twining his chance to be Commandant.

Q: Anything that sticks out in your mind particularly about your tour as Assistant Commandant? Of course, you were dealing on a higher level than you had been before and a lot of demands on you socially?

Davis: Oh absolutely. It was a demanding schedule. Just to demonstrate it, this is the one that broke my back--I got involved to go out and speak to a college in Phoenix. And since I was going to be there, the Navy League was having a luncheon, the college was having an afternoon speaking and symposium effort, and that evening there was another group ^{talk to.} /to/ I had this little jet aircraft along to stay with me. Knox and the aides were to help. The along/ day after that I was scheduled to be in Portland, Oregon again to go through about three sessions. The day after that,

in Los Angeles, again to go through a few sessions, and the day after that, in Washington for some kind of a meeting. So, here I am, flying into Phoenix, zip, zip, zip, changing clothing, off the elevator (I had a steward traveling along with me to help me keep in the right uniform) met at the door...one guy helping you take your coat off and the other one putting ^{another} / one--you get back on the elevator, the aides handing you the paper that's involved in your next stop! I was completely out of breath before I got back to Washington on that trip. So, I told them, "Never again! You've now found my limit; I can't possibly go on a three-day trip and make ^{of three} three appearances in each/places with that much flight time in between."

But it was that kind of a stint, almost constant exposure, even at night. For example, we were asked by the Secretary of the Navy to entertain a group that he had coming into town and he had been unavoidably called away. 30 people came out to the quarters for dinner, then ⁱⁿ to the parade, after the parade/^{Also}for coffee. / involved with this was somebody's son who was in a Scout troop. ^{The Scouts came in} /after the parade and went up in the garret for ice cream and coffee. All these were people we didn't even know! That just typifies the kind of pressures. Of course that would be impossible under the present regime where they don't have any stewards. We had adequate support so we could do those kind of things. I don't know how valuable it really is. ^{a plus} Certainly/for the people who came there and saw the life that we lived and attended the parade. That parade represents

perfection, and it's impressive. We certainly made friends for the Marine Corps out of those 30 people and Boy Scouts, I'm sure.

So, the pressure ^{applies} both socially and ⁱⁿ the travels and meetings. The pressures were great, but I thrive on that up to a point where they overdo it. The last part of my tour was in the JCS with the Salt talks and weapons mix and budget problems and all these things. It was hard, difficult work keeping yourself up on that vast array of problems and papers and it was a chore for me just to work myself through that bunch of JCS papers.

Q: You really had long days, then.

Davis: Oh, yes. There was just no end to the work.

Q: Now, you retired shortly after Cushman took over and he selected General Anderson.

Davis: He wanted his team in there and I certainly was not one to stand in the way...

End, Side 2, Tape 5

Beginning, Side 1, Tape 6

Q: Were you given an opportunity, were you asked if you wanted to go back to three stars?

Davis: In effect. I could have gone down and taken Anderson's job, FMFLant.

Q: You figured that you had had it by that point?

Davis: Well, that would not be good for me nor for the Marine Corps. I just never quite appreciated people who would move around like that and just occupy the position. No, it was General Cushman's Marine Corps and he needed his people and he should have his own man down at FMFLant like he should have everywhere, if that's the way he want it. I just happened to be not one of his and it came as no surprise to me.

Q: Had you had any conflicts with General Anderson or General Cushman before this?

Davis: No, this wasn't necessarily a conflict. We had disagreements, certainly. I'm sure that I did a lot of things that they didn't agree with and they certainly did things I didn't agree with, but there was nothing personal, no direct confrontations.

Q: How would you sum up your 34 years in the Marine Corps?

Davis: I wouldn't know how to do any better. I don't have any misgivings anywhere. How could you, going from a poor country boy in Georgia up to four stars in the most elite organization that in the world. There's just no way/I could imagine any major misgivings about that.

The thing that you miss most are the people. You know that the Marine Corps family is such a collection of totally outstanding people. Check off just the people I admire most, like Greene and Chapman and Walt and Chaisson, Masters and Buse and Nickerson, I could just go on and on. Exposure to General Krulak was a gain for me. I'm not associated with those

in
kind of people anymore. Even/my job here, where I was
involved with the presidents of Southern Bell, Georgia Power
Company, the gas company, the banks--involved with
them very frequently. There is not that quality of great
family relationship that we had in the Marine Corps, both for
me and for my family.

So, that's what we really miss, being out of it. Again, it
was great, I gave it everything I had. I can't look back and
see a single time when I took my pack off to coast. And it re-
sponded to that. That's why I'm / so many of our people/fail
concerned that today
to recognize and / the work ethic. As I told my battalion,
appreciate
preparing to go to Korea (in the few hours I had, you know, to
talk to the officers and the NCOs) this was a theme

and the general direction I've always gone and
will always go. "When we're working, we're going to be the
hardest working outfit ever. When we're playing, we're going to
play harder than everybody, and when we fight, we're going to
fight harder than everybody." That's the kind of challenge I've
held up for myself all the time. And it obviously paid off with
great, great dividends for me and my family.

Q: Do you find retirement difficult?

Davis: No, I had an ideal transition in that I was retired at
10 o'clock in the morning in Washington, and I was in my Atlanta
office at 2 o'clock in the afternoon in charge of the whole state
for the However, I was
/ Georgia Chamber of Commerce./involved with a paltry half million
dollar budget compared to the billions in Washington.

But, the effort was one of total scope in Georgia. Everything

from tourists to industrial development, to the legislation, to the schools. The whole fabric of Georgia's well being is involved in the Chamber of Commerce effort, and I was the executive vice president in charge of it. So that made the transition easy from a work standpoint because I could get out on the circuit. I was in demand seven days a week everywhere in the state to come help out with a problem or speak to a group. That gave me an opportunity to unwind, so to speak. Also, my family's all here and I have some property I bought when I was a second lieutenant. My son's nearby with a couple of big patches of land with cow herds on it. We have joined forces, and enjoy the great outdoors. At a family hideaway we have down in the country a house on a 12-acre fishing lake, we often assemble the family, spend all night roasting a pig, and have many friends participate in the day's activities.

I've got the best of everything right now, I guess, and I'm still able to maintain active interest in things that I'm devoted to. I'm a trustee in the Valley Forge Military Academy, and the Marine Military Academy, and on the board of visitors of Berry College up in the mountain. These are somewhat the same types of activity, education in a disciplined environment, which has all those attributes that you would expect. The students develop a self-discipline, they develop a sense of accomplishment. They can see that if they work hard towards an objective, that they can get it done, and quickly the discipline of a sergeant is replaced by a self-discipline, which means that it's a learning process.

George Bowman out at MMA has evidence that the spread between his entry test scores and his graduating test scores are the best in the country.

I'm interested in that and I spend some time with it.

At the same time, I've maintained my interest in the veterans associations. I'm on the board of the Retired Officers Association, recently the president of the 3d Division Association. I speak a lot to small groups around, on things about community development, which I was exposed to in the Chamber of Commerce. More recently, due to my concern about the posture of ^{our} national defense, I'm out sounding the alarm to every group I can. I try to limit that to two or three a month. We still travel when we can. You see, it's a great life right now.

Q: Well, it looks as though you're thriving on it. You look as good as you did, if not better, ^{than} when you left Headquarters Marine Corps.

Davis: You know, physically, I'm better. When I ended my tour in Vietnam, having ridden around in that helicopter with this aluminum bar across my back, I developed some damage to the spinal column around my shoulder. So I got where my hands would go numb at times, and I couldn't turn my head without pain. I came down here and got riding the tractor with a plow or a baler behind and got better. I also went to the doctor and he put me through some physical therapy efforts. But I can go now and work all day with this machinery and turn my head all the way around without pain.

I've improved. Fewer aches and pains than ^{I had} when I retired (laughs).

Q: Well, I think that that's a good point to end. I want to thank you very much for your hospitality. I've certainly enjoyed seeing you again. I think that we've spent a fruitful period of time on tape and certainly hope that you'll come up and visit us at our new historical center.

Davis: I want to do that. I've been kind of deliberate in my visits to Washington. Catch an early flight up and a late flight back and not spend too much time up there. I will from time to time plan some visits. I want to thank you very much for coming. It was great to see you.

Q: Thank you, General.

U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Major General Raymond G. Davis, USMC

Interviewer: Staff Sergeant Peter A. Justo, Jr., USMC

Place: Dong Ha Combat Base, Quang Tri Province, Republic of Vietnam, 4 November 1968-4 January 1969

Date of Interview: 1 January 1969

Subject: The 3d Marine Division's Mobile Concept of Operation in the northern I Corps Tactical Zone

Side 1, Tape 1

Justo: In the following interview the 270th NVA Division that General Davis refers to should be the 270th NVA Regiment.

This is a taped interview for the Oral History Program of the Marine Corps as requested by SSgt Justo. The interviewee is Major General Raymond G. Davis, Commanding General, 3d Marine Division. Today is January 1, 1969.

Davis: The suggested outline for the interview commences with a statement of the mission of the 3d Marine Division. The mission is assigned in many parts: primarily, a destruction of NVA and local forces in Quang Tri Province; secondarily, to maintain certain fixed positions along the DMZ and the protection of major bases throughout the province; finally, in close coordination and cooperation with the ARVN forces to carry out the above specific missions.

Our mission also, as far as the 3d Marine Division is concerned, as derived, would be to upgrade the effectiveness of the ARVN and local forces in Quang Tri Province, to speed the day that these forces might stand alone in defense of their country.

In the interview outline next, it is requested that a description of the tactical posture of the division over the past year be discussed. (pause)

A year ago the build-up in this area--northern I Corps along the DMZ--was well under way. The NVA had commenced the movement of divisional size forces into the area. In a short time the 324 Bravo Division had appeared and had moved through Quang Tri Province down towards Hue. The 304th Division and the 325 Charlie Division had moved into the Khe Sanh area. The 320th Division had moved into the area north of the DMZ. In addition, there were two to four separate screening regiments in the area at one time or another. The 270th Regiment maintained security in the north of the DMZ and at times launched its forces south of the DMZ. The 27th Separate Regiment also has a screening role along the DMZ as does the 138th NVA Separate Regiment. Out west near Khe Sanh has been the 246th Separate Regiment. And late in the spring a new--th this was about May--a new NVA Division, the 308th Division, came down from Hanoi and entered South Vietnam to the southwest of Khe Sanh.

The posture during the early days of 1968 found the 3d Marine Division disposed generally along the trace of the DMZ as far west as Camp Carroll and the Rock Pile, with a major force stationed in the vicinity of the Khe Sanh. In the main, the forces were in fixed positions, moving out on operations--sweep-type operations, primarily--periodically, and on a planned basis. Under the circumstances, this appeared to be the most effective use of the forces at that time. The Marine Corps in this part of the world was faced with a number of serious difficulties: ⁱⁿ /the helicopter fleet although in transition from the H34 to the CH46, the CH46 was having problems to such a degree that there was almost total standdown while the fuselage structures could be reinforced. ^{At the} /same time the weather, through February particularly, was 'socked in to such a degree that a high degree of mobility did not appear feasible.

Overall, the effectiveness of such a posture was limited. The enemy divisions, although severely punished with massive artillery and air attacks, did remain in position and punished small Marine forces which ventured outside of their perimeter. The same could be said of the area along the DMZ where forces were infiltrating through the area down to Base Area 101 ^{located} where Leatherneck Square was / --although called Leatherneck Square really belonged to the NVA. No less than a battalion-size unit ^{of Marines} /would venture into that area. Two full battalions were busily engaged in protecting the Cua Viet River. A large expenditure of forces ^{was required} /to protect the fixed

installations while at the same time being unable to operate in some large areas throughout the northern area. As one example, north of Route 9, Dong Ha Mountain, Rock Pile area, Mutter's Ridge--this area was not entered by Marine forces from June of 1967 until July of 1968. The 3d Division's area at that time in the early part of the year, extended ^{inland} from the lowlands on the coast, interlacing of sand and rich delta, ricelands, and soil washed down from the mountains by the Cam Lo River and the Quang Tri River. In about 10 kilometers we find the Piedmont: low, rolling land with scrub growth, good only for grazing cattle to a limited degree, for the production of charcoal, and currently the ^{hand} quarrying of rock by local Vietnamese for sale to our engineers because of the shortage of rock in northern I Corps. And finally, from Camp Carroll westward through Khe Sanh to the border, the very rugged, mountainous terrain which extends to 1738 meters on top of Tiger Tooth Mountain well north of Khe Sanh.

In this area there were a number of major bases. Across the DMZ trace the forward outposts: A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4. Behind those the Charlie positions: Charlie 1, 2, 3, 4. These are not necessarily related. The ARVN forces occupying A-1 and A-2 had their artillery and supporting installations in Charlie 1, generally astride Highway 1 north of Dong Ha up to the DMZ. Charlie 4 was on the coast above Cua Viet, manned by the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion. In the west--A-3 and at Con Thien A-4, backed by C-2 and C-3 artillery bases along a north/south road extending from Cam Lo to

Con Thien. These were the bases north of Dong Ha. Of course there was the base at the mouth of the river, Cua Viet, with the 3d Marines' headquarters, the amphibian tractor battalion, and the Navy's logistics effort with the river security force called Task Force Clearwater. At Dong Ha itself, a major base at one time, almost 14,000 Americans were in the Dong Ha Combat Base.

Developing to the south was Quang Tri Combat Base, with the helicopter group, division rear, under construction were hospital and logistics facilities. And during the course of 1968 Dong Ha Combat Base had been reduced to about 7,000, with Quang Tri up near 10,000 and others moving out to a new base in the west--Vandegrift Combat Base in the north/south valley between the Rock Pile and Ca Lu. Camp Carroll was the major artillery base with 175 guns from the Army plus Marine and Army 8-inch, 155s, 105s. ^{The} 4th Marines Regiment was headquartered there. Camp Carroll has subsequently been dismantled; closed down officially on the 28th of December 1968 because of the forward displacement of the artillery. 175s have moved to the west, primarily at Ton Son Lam near the Rock Pile which has been renamed Elliott; and to the east in Dong Ha and C-1.

However, since the bombing pause, a portion of the heavy artillery has ^{moved} to the south and has been retubed as 8-inch. The other artillery at Camp Carroll has moved north and into the mountains and other mobile fire bases; for example, Dong Ha Mountain which is about 7, 8 kilometers north of Camp

Carroll has one of the light artillery batteries now in position on top of that mountain in a mobile posture.

Other bases, of course, were the fire support base at Ton Son Lam near the Rock Pile now Elliott, and at Ca Lu and the major base at Khe Sahn with four infantry battalions and three artillery batteries--three light artillery batteries--plus some medium artillery. With these at Khe Sahn, the battalions were spread outside the immediate area in Hill Mass 558, 861, 881. 1st Battalion, 9th Marines was on a rock quarry area just west of Khe Sanh, almost tied into the perimeter. And of course the ^{fourth} / was in the perimeter itself, and the with the airfield/ 26th Marines (CP.

Early in April the 1st Air Cavalry Division was assigned operational control of the area from Ca Lu through Khe Sanh, and launched Operation PEGASUS. 1st Marine Regiment was assigned as was the 26th Marine Regiment. The Air Cavalry Division established a fire base or a support base at LZ Stud.

LZ Stud, although abandoned for a long period, has

since July been reestablished as Vandegrift Combat Base and, as such, supports all the 3d Division operations in the mountains to the west under guidance of CG, Task Force Hotel (who is one of the ADCs for the 3d Marine Division). (pause)

In it's /the next portion of this interview/desired that the current posture of the 3d Marine Division and the development of this posture be discussed.

After Operation PEGASUS in the west, which relieved the siege at Khe Sanh, permitted the forces there to move out of the bases, one brigade of the cavalry remained to the south and west of Khe Sanh with its helicopter capability and its mobile fire bases. Battalions of the 26th Marines were replaced by the 1st Marines; subsequently other battalions were posted in the general area.

And at about this time--in late April--the 320th Division and two separate regiments from north of the DMZ crossed the DMZ and moved rapidly south towards the river immediately above Dong Ha. This was one of the turning points in the 3d Marine Division's fortunes in northern I Corps. A major effort was committed against this division: The Air Cavalry Brigade was moved from Khe Sanh and positioned in the flats north of Dong Ha; Marine battalions were utilized from the fixed positions around Leatherneck Square; an Army battalion was moved up from the Americal Division. It had been posted in reserve around Camp Evans, and it moved and was positioned north of Dong Ha again in the flats along Jones Creek east of Highway 1.

The results of this heavy contact with the NVA were very severe insofar as ^{enemy} casualties were concerned, was very difficult for the North Vietnamese to absorb. In excess of 2,000 enemy were left dead on the battlefield: casualties inflicted by the U.S. forces as well as the 2d ARVN Regiment which is astride Highway 1 between Dong Ha and the DMZ.

Nine days after these forces had withdrawn to the north, the 320th Division came south again. At this time the more mobile posture of the 3d Marine Division then was starting to become a fact. In the fixed positions around Leatherneck Square where previously a full infantry battalion had operated from those positions, each one was reduced to one company; where four battalions had operated from ^{A-3,} A-4, C-2, C-3, now this area was assigned to one infantry battalion. With the onfall of the 320th Division again, the night of the 22nd of May 3/9 was flown down from Khe Sanh, forces were moved out of the fixed positions, 3rd Marines, 9th Marines, and the 4th Marines joined with the 2d ARVN Regiment to surround the enemy forces in turn, their 64th Regiment in Leatherneck Square, and finally the 48th and 52nd Regiment in the flats east of Highway 1.

Encirclement was possible against one regiment, partial encirclement of the others. The result was: in 10 days this attack had been largely destroyed and almost 1500 enemy dead were left on the battlefield. This largely removed the 320th Division as a serious threat, although in August they were to return again in the west near the Rock Pile.

In the meantime at Khe Sanh a mobile operation was launched in early June called ROBIN NORTH and ROBIN SOUTH. This operation was a forerunner to the highly mobile operations which have been conducted by the 3d Marine Division since that time. The 1st Marines launched two battalions to the south of Route 9 near the limit of range of artillery along Route 9 at Khe

to
 Sanh, /work back to the north. Immediately following, while this was in progress, the 4th Marines established fire bases in the southern panhandle; 105s and 155s atop^a/peak at Robin about 8 kilometers south of Route 9. And then subsequently over the mountain ridge another 8 kilometers south, Firebase Torch which eventually was occupied by two 105 batteries. Four battalions--3/9 was attached to the 4th Marines--four battalions worked out a new road in the southern area up to 20 kilometers south of Khe Sanh. In this effort almost 700 NVA were killed. The newly arrived 308th Division committed two of its regiments against the Marines south of Highway 9. Four of the six battalions were largely destroyed in some of these heavy attacks against Marines in hill positions. This was a new regiment; it was not prepared for the type of combat it was committed to. The troops made too much noise, they were detected, they/brought under artillery fire, scattered, dispersed, and finally found themselves--as day broke--just outside the wire trying to launch a coordinated attack. Of course they were destroyed by the artillery and air, and finally mopped up by the Marine forces. In fact, shortly after this action, which ended in late June, the 308th Division went away and has not been back since.

It was soon discovered that the NVA could not cope with this kind of highly mobile warfare where artillery batteries were positioned on razorbacks and high pinnacles throughout an area, 8 kilometers apart so as to provide mutually supporting artillery fire plus 2500 meter overshoot to hit mortars beyond

the base, with infantry battalions operating under the artillery fan. In brief, an infantry battalion with its direct support artillery battery formed a team. The artillery is positioned, (if the pinnacle is sufficiently high and precipice, and has a precipice on the side) to be defended by one rifle platoon. Many times the battalion command post itself is positioned with the artillery, never more than one rifle company to protect the artillery and the battalion installation. This provides, as a minimum, three rifle companies to operate forward under the 8,000 meter fan of the light artillery.

In addition, the companies themselves operate independently insofar as the mutual support is concerned. As long as they're within the 8,000 meter fan of the artillery, there's no requirement for the rifle companies to operate together; they can be several kilometers apart. A normal application would be for each company to be assigned an area 2-3 kilometers on the side, establish its base around an LZ where helicopters can resupply and lift out casualties, and then operate patrols until that square is thoroughly searched out and cleared.

End Side 1, Tape 1

Begin Side 2, Tape 1

Then the company might be lifted by helicopter to another area within the artillery fan, This is continued until a plot of the day and night activities of all companies superimposed over a map would show a very careful, detailed search of the entire area.

Another method of operation for a battalion is to move down heavily wooded ridge lines. The artillery base is established. One company might move forward, seize the first high nob, busy itself cutting an LZ to get resupply in/casualties out, and then while this was going on, platoons would be searching out the fingers which are normally associated with these individual peaks along the ridge line. At the same time another company would pass through this company, seize the next hilltop, search out the fingers, and cut an LZ. And a third company likewise--pass through, seize the nob, cut the LZ, search out the fingers--so that as the battalion progressed down the ridge, every several hundred meters you'd find an LZ and you'd find these companies had thoroughly searched all the fingers throughout the ridge. With this system that we found major trail networks and cache areas that the NVA had been using for the better part of ten years. (interruption)

It was soon apparent that the enemy relied on his preposition stores and his trail network to support his forces. At intervals apart in Vietnam. /about an 8-hour walk/along a trail you'd find positions, his stores, way station, bunkers, supplies, hospital; and then about 8-hours' march away, another such system.

Porters apparently would carry supplies from one to the next then remain hidden in the bunkers during the day, and either go back for another load or carry the load on forward to the next position (depending on how the transportation elements happened to be operating in that area). We found that the NVA porters and many of the troops had no maps. There were a few maps, a few sketches of the trail network, but in the main most of them relied on guides and the use of heavily travelled, well marked, high speed trails--log steps up the steep slopes, bamboo rails along the sharp drop-off areas. We came to realize that if we were able to keep Marines on these trails, even from time to time, and were able to clean out his way stations, destroy his bunkers and his supplies periodically, that we could ^{severely} limit his activity.

At the same time this was going on in the hills where most of his trails and the supplies seemed to be located, we conducted similar operations in the Piedmont and committed forces to eliminate as many of his lesser forces as possible in the flatland. ^{Therefore,} / we could apply pressure against him throughout the entire area leaving no area for him to hide in.

This discovery or realization of the enemy's mode of operation, of course, was a major reason for our change in our concept of operation. It's apparent now, that the enemy divisions in the area have been largely defeated and driven out. This has meant that

much of the 3d Marine Division effort could be transferred into pacification and the elimination of small forces throughout the area. 3d Marine Division forces are now operating--or have been operating--throughout the DMZ area from the coast to Laos, including the most northwesternmost area where the DMZ joins Laos. We are in many ^{have} areas that Americans / never operated in before, all the way south along the Laotian border to the panhandle, around the Laotian salient down towards the northern extremities of the A Shau Valley, across through old Base Area 101 to the coast. In other words, on a regular basis Marines are in all the Quang Tri Province; the mountains, the piedmont, the flats.

To cover this area, we have assigned under 3d Division operational control the 1st Brigade of the 5th Mechanized Division with its straightleg infantry battalion of four rifle companies, a mechanized infantry battalion of three mechanized companies plus the tank battalion, a battalion of 155 direct support, self-propelled artillery, and the normal engineer and other support ^{for the} / brigade. The brigade was initially employed along the DMZ once it became operational in late August, early September, to make maximum use of its track vehicles as the Marine forces moved west into the mountains. Subsequent to the departure ^{added} of the Air Cavalry Division which ^{area} / to the division/a strip about 10 kilometers wide from the coast to Laos. The brigade was moved to the south to employ its tracks in the

flatland east of Quang Tri, along Highway 1, into the low piedmont with enough of the high ground for them to exercise their foot infantry. The 1st ARVN Regiment shared the area with the 1st Brigade, 5th Mechanized Division.

Khe Sanh base was dismantled. This became possible because of the adoption of this mobile posture instead of sitting in fixed positions around Khe Sanh. Marines wanted to be mobile throughout the land mass which covered Khe Sanh, making a target of the enemy forces as opposed to the enemy making a target of Khe Sanh. To support this we established hilltop artillery positions at Firebase Shepherd, Firebase Cates covering Khe Sanh, with the 4th Marines becoming the Khe Sanh Regiment. One battalion operated out of Ca Lu and Vandegrift, covering the rear area, one battalion operated out of Cates covering the north and west of Khe Sanh, one battalion operating out of Shepherd covering south and west beyond Khe Sanh. This posture continued from its establishment in late June until recently when the 3d Marines moved south to conduct mountain operations for the 1st Division, and it was necessary to move the 4th Marines up to help man the western portion of the DMZ area. By closing Khe Sanh, the same force could cover which much greater land mass. Replacing the four battalions/defended Khe Sanh during the siege, two battalions covered the hill masses around Khe Sanh and towards Ca Lu--and covered them very effectively. Therefore Khe Sanh was not needed, Route 9 which required the better part of two battalions to maintain its

security from Ca Lu to Khe Sanh was closed, and therefore these forces became available for mobile operations elsewhere.

Next the division turned its attention to the area along the DMZ west of Con Thien. Marines had not been in this area since June of 1967. It was now July of 1968. No Marines had been back to Mutter's Ridge, Helicopter Valley, and such areas.

At about this time the situation as far as artillery above the DMZ had improved. With our application of additional fire power we swept south of the DMZ, removing all enemy installations and logistics south of the DMZ. Then moving westward we inserted the 9th Marines against the DMZ extending west from Con Thien to a position above Dong Ha Mountain, inserted the 3rd Marines to their west, and two ARVN battalions to the west of the Rock Pile. The two Marine regiments worked their way south. In addition, they prepared landing zones throughout the area. And finally, the 3rd Marines extending their operations to the northwest along the upper Cam Lo Valley, prepared more landing zones and fire support bases which were to add a great deal to our later efforts in this area. In fact, certain of the landing zones well out into the hinterlands have reoccupied by Marines as often as four times in the last 7 or 8 months. One fire base, Fire Base Henderson, down south to Ba Long Valley was recently occupied for the fifth time since it was established in August. This is an indication of the great value of preparing the battlefield throughout this triple canopy, torturous terrain, mountain tops.

You can now see throughout many, many, many landing zones and fire support bases which are ready to be occupied quickly if North Vietnamese forces appear. This doesn't mean that we do not have to be careful. A number of them have been mined and booby-trapped.

We take a close look with the air observers. If all appears untouched, quiet, we will insert a reconnaissance team. If the reconnaissance team finds no evidence of enemy activity, then without prep we can immediately enter. But if we find evidence of the enemy--mines, booby-traps, or otherwise--then we prep it with air and artillery, and enter it on an assault basis. This system has proven to be very effective, and we've had no serious problems with it. With the result that recently a compilation indicated that the 3rd Marine Division units had been inserted near 800 landing zones since May throughout the area; and we have artillery, fire support bases throughout the area where we can provide 105mm fire anywhere in Quang Tri Province on very, very short notice. This means that the enemy enters through the DMZ west from Khe Sanh, south of Khe Sanh, or up through the A Shau Valley anywhere, that he enters the Quang Tri Province, he'll be subjected to immediate attack with artillery and mobile forces.

One aspect of the mobile concept which has really proven to be a key, is the use of long-range reconnaissance patrols. The 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion (reinforced) with a Force Reconnaissance Battalion and recently with some additional

platoons from the SLFs, attempts to maintain 58-60 recon teams active. This will permit 40-45 teams in the field, another ten or fifteen teams either going or coming--being briefed, being debriefed, being inserted, being extracted. This has meant that every indication of enemy activity from whatever means is explored by the insertion of reconnaissance teams.

In the DMZ, along the Ben Hai River, west of Tiger Tooth Mountain and the far reaches above northwest of Khe Sanh, south of Khe Sanh, down Da Kron River which heads towards A Shau Valley, throughout Base Area 101; the piedmont west of Quang Tri, Dong Ha; the flatlands and the village lands throughout--everywhere--on a continuing basis, a massive reconnaissance team effort is maintained.

These were generally in two categories. Under the artillery fan as established at the time, we would use Sting Ray techniques with 8-10 men in a team, seeking the enemy, seeking opportunities to deliver fire upon them. Well-out, smaller teams--four or five men--going on the basis of secrecy: only to observe, stay out of sight. If the enemy is encountered, they attempt to escape. These are not normally reinforced unless we are able to insert artillery at the time. Under the artillery fan, normally they would be reinforced if the enemy presented an adequate target. On contact the team hangs in and fights it out or if it's a small contact and they start to take casualties, we might extract them. However, if it's a large contact and under the artillery

fan and the opportunity presents itself, they are reinforced in order to attempt to destroy the enemy force in its entirety.

This then completes the description of the concept of operations with some examples.

We rely very heavily on supporting units to make this concept work. First is the Marine and Army, Air Force, Navy air; primarily Marine. Marine Corps helicopters, Marine Corps air support, Marine Corps air observers--the works.

The Army provides us with some assistance. In the high in mountains to the west, many areas small landing zones can be entered for evacuation or command and control only with the helicopter Huey-Hotel model/which the Army provides. It has the additional power, it has the side gunners, it has the lift capability. On one occasion an Army Huey on loan from XXIV Corps was able to extract 14 casualties from one LZ under some very severe conditions. The only time the LZ was opened over a period of days, 14 casualties--six across the seat, one held in their lap, one with each door gunner, two in the front seats, the remaining numbers sitting in the deck of the chopper. The chopper pilot announced upon arrival that he could haul out all casualties that could pile inside the cabin. This is the result of the additional power in the Hotel model Huey. And in the LZ that existed at the time none of the Marine Corps helicopters could have accomplished this medevac.

The Army also has provided in our more critical operations the use of an Air Cavalry Squadron with its scout ships

and supporting gun ships and command and control ships. This squadron applies a massive effort--scout ships paired with gun ships, treetop level reconnaissance, very careful examination foot by foot of the proposed LZ, nearby terrain, routes in and out. We've had remarkable success utilizing this Army capability. We've had any number of helicopters hit in LZ's. The record north, in Lancaster north, the record was nine hits in one LZ--nine helicopters hit in one LZ; these are troop helicopters. A majority of those hit were through the cockpit within inches of disaster. Fortunately none were lost. We have lost helicopters in a number of other LZ's. None of these helicopters were hit in an LZ which was screened and searched out by the Army Air Cavalry troop. At the same time, none of the ships and the Air Cavalry troop were hit while working in our area. In other words, the score is perfect. None of the Army ships were hit, none of the Marine ships were hit when they were working together. At other times Marine ships took a severe beating from gunfire in the LZ's. This Army troop on a number of occasions found 12.7 AA guns in the vicinity of the LZ and brought in supporting weapons, and they were destroyed prior to the landing.

At least half the days in the month we used an Army crane, the CH-54, to move our 155 howitzers into fire bases. 155s are urgently required to give the additional range and weight of metal in the heavy canopy where 8-inch and 155 cannot reach to dig out the bunkers. The 105 is not anywhere near

as effective. Artillery / weapons are moved frequently. When they break down they are taken back to the shop. And in addition, we have certain dozers, hoes, back / CB types which this heavier crane helicopter can move; and it also lifts our CH-46 downed helicopters.

The Navy, of course, provides the gunfire from off shore and also its fixed-wing air support primarily on a divert basis from its out-of-country strikes.

The Air Force likewise provides for flare ships and for these machine gun laden transports, providing massive machine gun fire against ground targets, and its fixed-wing, plus the massive B-52 strikes which have been very helpful in the 3rd Marine Division operations.

There has been a new idea in the 3rd Marine Division in that the use of B-52 strikes in support of ground maneuver has been fostered and developed largely as a result of our effort. Earlier the B-52s required hard targets, easily identifiable, systems of bunkers and so forth, in order to approve a strike. On occasion, primarily through personal intervention with General Abrams on a visit to Dong Ha, we were able to get Arc Light B-52 strikes approved in support of ground maneuvers south of Khe Sanh. This worked so well that it has been approved as a concept of operation and has been used on a number of occasions very effectively in 3rd Division operations. In other words, our operation is planned, we see the areas in which the Arc Light would be most beneficial and where we

could provide early ground exploitation, we lay on the Arc Light in terms of where and when and how many, and this is delivered largely on that basis and our operation is timed accordingly. There've been some very substantial gains from this employment. In the first place you get maximum shock action. The enemy forces--mortars and otherwise--have a difficult time reacting to your landing. Second, their direct destructive effect (we found in the DMZ back in September-October a total of 160 freshly buried dead in an area). Certainly much of this was attributable to the Arc Light although we had struck the area with other weapons throughout the course of our preparation and maneuver.

End Side 2, Tape 1

Begin Side 1, Tape 2

Another key to our success is the very fine ARVN regiment in Quang Tri Province. The 2d ARVN Regiment operates hand-in-hand with U.S. forces as does the 1st ARVN Regiment. They go with us into the mountains. They establish fire bases. The 2d ARVN Regiment has been west of the Rock Pile on an operation west of Vandegrift, then out to Khe Sanh landing on 881, 861 3 months after we had abandoned those; worked northwest of Khe Sanh. They've been northwest of Cam Lo on three different occasions with us. We haul them in our helicopters, support them; and they operate with our forces. The same with the 1st ARVN Regiment: It has been launched west of Quang Tri and

operates with both the Army brigade and with Marine units throughout the southern portion of Quang Tri Province.

The relationship has been very fine. In fact I treat these two ARVN regiments the same as my own regiments: visit their commanders almost every day, discuss plans of the division with them, seek their assistance, suggest operations with them. And it would appear from the reaction that they must be under instruction from their superiors to do anything that 3rd Division wants them to do. At the same time we attempt to do anything that the ARVN units want done, in the way they want it done. So therefore it has been a remarkably coherent, single effort on the part of the U.S. and ARVN forces in Quang Tri Province.

Very briefly summarize by describing our most recent and successful operation against the 320th Division.

After its abortive attempts on the coast in the flatlands, the 320th in August moved south through the DMZ north of the Rock Pile--all three infantry regiments. It had prepositioned stores in the mountains west of the Rock Pile. Its 64th Regiment was met initially on the east above Cam Lo by the 3rd Marines' forward elements. Finally the entire 3rd Marine Regiment was deployed against them, two battalions of 9th Marines were inserted north of them along the DMZ. This regiment (64th) was dispersed, most of their supplies and equipment were captured, and many of them were killed. 3rd Marines shifted westward as did the 9th Marines, to find the 52d Regiment. Again, a similar reaction. And as the 52d was being (pause)

assaulted, the 48th appeared on the scene near Mutter's Ridge. The 9th Marines west of the Rock Pile and the 3rd Marines generally astride the Rock Pile and eastward to Dong Ha Mountain found the enemy was breaking up into small units, so three battalions were inserted along Mutter's Ridge north of the enemy's main force. (pause) Subsequently as prisoners indicated that they had orders to escape to the north across the Ben Hai River, two additional battalions were inserted on the banks of the Ben Hai to work their way south. To the west and along the DMZ in the north large caches of supplies were captured and destroyed (according to some calculations would equate to 400 truck loads of supplies): 28,000 mortar rounds, 5,000 mines, and 13,000 grenades, 1200 rockets; 32 tons of rice, 10 tons of salt plus hospital supplies.

The NVA between August and October left 1568 dead on the battlefield that we found; possibly more we did not find. The 320th Division, severely defeated, moved north. (pause)

Next on our outline are lessons learned.

One of the lessons which stretches the imagination most, I suppose might be stated in terms of economy of force. In the early months of 1968 there were twenty-four U.S. maneuver battalions in Quang Tri Province. This has now been reduced to ten; and the security of the area has improved many-fold. This is a direct result of ^{the} mobile concept.

The utilization of helicopters has been improved at every turn; recent tabulations show that helicopter effectiveness in terms of troops and supplies moved in Quang Tri

Province is 29 percent better than the 1st Wing norm as applied south of the pass at Da Nang. These came about-- these gains-- largely through necessity. The large area assigned, the major enemy forces within it, the limited helicopter support available meant that every effort had to be made to cut down the forces, upgrade the mobility of forces, and cut the helicopter requirement.

Vandegrift Combat Base was one key ingredient: It provided for short turn-around for helicopters, eliminating the previous requirement to move from Dong Ha or Quang Tri or Camp Carroll. It provided for helicopter refueling, helicopter rearming, highly sophisticated lift pad for supplies and equipment, command and control including a DASC, FSCC, communications; reconnaissance control mechanism; command under Task Force Hotel, first General Hoffman, then General Chip, now General Garretson; medical facility in Vandegrift; 10 days' supplies for two regiments; staging for up to three battalions where they could fire weapons, get themselves organized with any number of liftoff points for the helicopters to move the troops although an old, abandoned runway provides the main area for liftoff.

In the development of the liftoff pad stemming primarily from Tac logs, we have a representative from each battalion and from each artillery entity in a bunker by the pad. They take orders; they log them, chart them, get them staged on a lane painted on the pad out front which belongs to them.

They're put in the nets and put on charts--operates very much like the chart work in the DASC--a sheet is prepared listing all the units by a line number with the call sign, location, frequency so that each resupply helicopter in the morning gets a sheet. Then as he approaches the pad, the tower says to him, "I have a load for you to go to line number 6. You'll find it on pad Alpha, lane 4. This is the extent of the transmission." As he hovers a crew on the ground who have the same information, hooks him on as he pauses briefly; he goes off, drops it--everything external loads--and back again. The helicopter will sit down for fuel or sit down for chow or crew relief; otherwise the resupply is continuous, immediate, effective.

In the threat of foul weather or as darkness closes in, the Task Force Hotel representatives in the bunker at the pad have their heads together with all representatives--regiments as well as battalions. They determine within the regiment their priorities, and Hotel acts as referee to insure that the most urgent supplies get out before the weather closes or before darkness. This minimizes the ^{emergency} resupplies otherwise.

Further, as the net load of supplies is lifted off, an announcement goes in to the representative in the bunker; he calls the unit, tells them to be on the alert to receive a certain chopper in so many minutes. At that time the LZ of the unit is cleared, smoke is ready, and the handling at the other end is expedited.

Another development which lends to economy of force is the reconnaissance effort which I described in some detail, but these reconnaissance teams are put down where intelligence indicates the enemy might be or has been. And more than 60 percent of our teams find specific enemy evidence, either contact direct or see fresh signs or see enemy.

A recent development has been the improvement in the fire support bases. We have gone to very high pinnacles. One recent one on ^amountain top 1308 meters high, others on razorback ridges where it's possible to position the artillery in a single line along a razorback ridge with precipice slopes on either side. These offered good advantages: first, in blasting away the timbers, the timbers fall off a side, you have less timber to remove in order to get rid of the artillery masking. At the same time you minimize your security requirements. The 4th Regiment at this time, has three fire bases: Dong Ha Mountain, Russell and Neville to the west--all three protected by one rifle platoon each whereas a few months ago there was a little different approach to fire base preparation we were using a rifle company each. So we saved two rifle companies by going to high pinnacles and razorback ridges.

Much of the effective use of Marine Corps helicopters came through the early assignment of Brigadier General Homer Dan Hill to Quang Tri, somewhat in direct support of the 3rd Marine Division. This provided this division with--in effect--

an air/ground team capability so that the division had an aviation commander here. General Hill has since gone. And I think one of the great lessons to be learned is that the division needs an aviation command element immediately responsive to its needs. It was only because of this that the present system was refined quickly and made to work as effectively as it has. General Hill's continued presence throughout the early development of this concept made it work. Otherwise I'm not sure we could have had the progress we have had in so short a time under the concept of a division at Dong Ha and a wing at Da Nang.

Another problem concerns the control of the landing by helicopter--command and control. The infantry commander has too little control of his force from the time it's loaded into the helicopters until he rejoins it in the landing zone. We have on occasion prepped the wrong LZ; we've put forces down into the wrong LZ; we've had abortions; we've had problems. The infantry commander is in no position to influence what's happening to his force once they're lifted. I think he should have. I think we need to find ways for the infantry commander to be in on the 11th hour decision which effects his force and effects the accomplishment of the mission assigned to his force. And this is an area that we need to give a lot of thought to.

We need to reconsider our need for certain equipment. Certainly in motor transport or artillery and infantry units we need to look to the helicopter for transportation. We need

good, substantial chain saws. We need better laydown-type munitions for the clearance of LZs; aviation ordnance has not been able to do it, even the 10,000 pound ordnance efforts. Twenty feet off the target you can ^{hit} / a thousand feet down the side of the mountain. We need a laydown remote control-type LZ preparation charge. Lightweight tractors and back hoes, the ones procured by the Marine Corps on an emergency basis and airshipped out here have been a key to the success of the effort 3rd Division has made. We need more gun ships. Our operations are limited almost every day both patrol insertions and supply and assault landings--limited every day by the shortage of gun ships. It's apparent that we must have towed 155 howitzers. The self-propelled cannot be placed on the mountaintop.

We must have light helicopter scout ships. I would no more say that we could do without scout ships than I were to say that an infantry platoon on a trail need not put scouts out. The scouts provide the security for the troop-laden helicopter force. This security is of a type not provided by any other means--air observers, no one has been able to find some of the anti-aircraft and other weapons which would normally threaten the force.

Rifle companies need to be up to strength or as near so as practicable. By utilizing rifle companies on a widely separated basis, they need their full strength in order to protect themselves against sizeable enemy forces.

In closing I would like to say that Marine Corps engineers have been magnificent!! Rapelling into LZs, blasting down 30-inch hardwood trees, driving lightweight dozers and back hoes on the edge of the precipice, they've been magnificent!

End of interview

U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Major General Raymond G. Davis, USMC

Interviewer: Staff Sergeant Willis S. Bernard, Jr., USMC

Date and Place of interview: 7 April 1969
Dong Ha Combat Base, Quang Tri
Province, Republic of Vietnam

Subject: Experiences of MajGen Davis while serving as
Commanding General, 3d Marine Division

Side 1, Tape 1

Davis: I have cut a previous tape which explored in some detail the activities of the 3d Marine Division over the past several months. Also, there has been published in the Marine Corps Gazette or are being prepared for publication, other articles which cover various aspects of the 3d Marine Division's operations. These are detailed descriptions of various individual operations, and also some discussion of parts of these operations, such as the operations of Vandegrift Combat Base in combined operations with the ARVN and local forces, the pacification program, the concepts which involve mobility of the 3d Marine Division, the defeat of the 320th NVA Division, Dewey Canyon, reconnaissance; other areas of specific interest are available in one form or another. This interview tape would avoid as much as possible repetition of those details which have appeared elsewhere.

In terms of a general summary of the operations of the 3d Marine Division during my tour in Vietnam, I'd have to describe/as a almost/total victory over both the major NVA forces and the local forces infrastructure as well as almost a total peace in Quang Tri Province. I say this with some confidence because of the five regular NVA divisions which have operated in or through Quang Tri Province in the past year, all were soundly defeated and none have been present for a number of months. To review those briefly--the Khe Sanh Divisions, the 304th, the 325 Charlie at the time of the absorbing siege: 325 Charlie after/some punishment moved out and went south in March; 304th was engaged heavily by the Marines along Route 9, particularly to the south of Route 9; the 308th Division came down from Hanoi and inserted two of its regiments south of Route 9. What we anticipated to be a reinforcement actually was a replacement, and 304th Division having lost heavily left the country in late May. This 308th Division lasted a very short time, as we launched the enemy first Marines south of the main elements of the/force to sweep north towards Khe Sanh. Then/^{we} launched the 4th Regiment, with 3/9 attached to put fire bases on Robin and further south, and to Torch, to explore a new road which had been built across the salient south of Khe Sanh. In some very sharp skirmishes, the 308th Division, four out of the six battalions it had brought into the country, were largely destroyed. One battalion commander/^{was} captured; their radios, machine guns,

were also were
mortars/captured; over seven hundred/killed. So by mid-June
the 308th Division had been driven off, battered; and none of
the three enemy divisions/ Khe Sanh have been back since mid-
June (more than 10 months).

The 324 Bravo broke into separate regiments and moved south, participated in the Tet effort down in the Hue area and north of Hue. It was heavily contested by the 101st Airborne Division and the Cavalry Division. One regiment has since moved well south; the other two regiments moved back north and are still north of the Ben Hai. The fifth of these five regular divisions, the 320th, was more persistent; it went into heavy skirmishes north of Dong Ha from late April to the end of May. It came down twice, and left almost 3800 dead on the battlefield. The second time it came down after being back in the north for only 9 days, a captured company sergeant said that out of about ninety men in his company, sixty-two were brand new; the other NCO said the new men were not permitted to talk to the old men before they came down. So this was not really much of an effort. The 320th then went away until August. All three regiments then came south of the Ben Hai, brushed against the screening companies of the 3d Marines.

I inserted the 9th Marines north of them. First north of Cam Lo against their 64th Regiment which was broken up. We captured their supplies, killed many of them, moved west to confront the 52nd Regiment and found the 48th. The 9th Marines found very large cache areas--28,000 mortar rounds, 5,000 mines, million and a half rounds of small arm

We then
 ammunition and the like. /put battalions north of his main
 elements on Mutter's Ridge; and finally as he broke up,
 prisoners reported they were instructed to get back across
 the Ben Hai. We put two battalions on the banks of the Ben
 Hai, pushed the U.S. elements /Army/out from Con Thien, the ARVN out from Cam
 Lo, made a massive effort to entrap his forces. He broke
 up into small groups and fled. His artillery quit shooting.
 As the prisoners reported: they lost track of the location of
 their own units. He left 1586, as I recall, dead on the battlefield. He has not been back since
 mid-October. So all of the divisional size forces have gone
 and none have returned.

The enemy has also had some screening regiments along the north:
 the 138th on the east; 27th north of Cam Lo/Dong Ha Mountain;
 the 246th out northwest along the DMZ; 270 Separate Regiment
 generally north of the 138th, and there's some evidence that
 they have exchanged places with the 138th. These separate
 regiments have really not changed their operations in my time
 here. They operate in and out of the DMZ, across the river;
 they stash supplies, they support the local forces, they pro-
 vide local forces with mortar crews, RPG's; they mine roads
 and ambush work in a screening and harassing role just as
 they always have, and no change / the following bombing halt. Right
 after the bombing halt we did have a series of ambushes and
 mines, but this may or may not have been associated with the
 bombing halt because it happens periodically from time to time.

We've captured mortar men with their trousers still wet from wading in the river. They fire at us from in the DMZ, they hide their caches a few hundred meters south of the southern boundary of the DMZ, on the boundary, or just inside; they don't seem to know where the boundary is. Or if they know, they don't seem to care where it is. So there's been no change in the employment of these screening regiments along the DMZ.

Of course further south in and out of Laos, they had the 6th Separate Regiment and the 9th Separate Regiment; they had local forces, the 31st Local Force Group headquartered with above the Ben Hai River/up to eight or ten or sometimes more local force companies rotating in and out of Quang Tri Province. And then there are other local force companies that operate in and out of Laos and the hills southwest of Quang Tri.

Once the divisional forces were gone we turned our attention to pacification. In 60-90 days we completely pacified the area. A major problem at Cam Lo, for example: we put 2d Battalion, 3rd Marines in there. Marines lived with the local forces, Marine fire teams moved/^{right}in with the RF squads and so forth--lived with them. As an indication of their problem, initially the locals had no night ambushes outside their compounds before the program started (zero night ambushes). But in just 60 days they had 88 night ambushes with the local forces in the Cam Lo area. They sprung a lot of ambushes on the NVA; the NVA have gone away, and as recently as this week the district chief who was

pretty badly browbeaten back in November, is the cock of the roost in every way, ^{He}/personnally led--two weeks ago--a reaction force and an ambush in which the local forces killed a number ^{and} of NVA /VC, suffering only slight wounds among their own troops. They're positive down there that the VC do not ^{now}/come into the Cam Lo area where once they visited every night.

Other details concerning this and the other pacification program include the cordon and search operations. We've screened eyeball to eyeball some 80,000 people in 60 days, this all outside the Quang Tri and Dong Ha populated areas. 80,000 screened, 1600 ~~VC~~ arrested, up to about a third subsequently have been released after serving a while in the Quang Tri jails. A lot of deserters, draft dodgers--maybe three hundred--some bigwigs, village chiefs, tax collectors, ^{VC} the/recruiting officer for the coastal area, some with prices ^{were} on their head--~~all~~ picked up in this screening operation. This has been so effective that now there is very little problem in the villages.

We have had a few attacks with some of the local force companies and sappers getting into friendly compounds. But in the main, we've been able to feel that the place was secure. ^{and I'll} 3d Division headquarters--~~knock~~ on wood--is probably the only division headquarters in the country that has not been rocketed or shelled during this so-called current offensive.

Reacting to this lack of enemy force, we've been able to break our armed forces down into small units: four-man hunter-killer teams out with Claymore ambushes! The team hides on the trails with an ambush of claymores, if

a small group comes by, they hit them and move in. If it's a large group they hit them and fade away: this has proven effective.

The only/^{enemy}change recently during / ^{their}all-out offensive, so-called, throughout the country(starting in late February)has been a very aggressive attitude on the part of the screening regiments across the north. We've had sappers inside some of our fire bases, and notably Russell and Neville. Russell was a near disaster;with a heavy fog they got through the wire, three groups of about three teams each, four men per team; got in with their demolitions and their folding-stock AK47s, attacked the headquarters installations, the artillery, and the mortar crews. ^{own}Our/^{own}artillery had been firing at the time of the attack; and actually they came in under cover of the noise of our own artillery and mortars being fired--as the story is told. They/^{came in}thick fog, spread out / ^{through}the position, and killed a lot of Marines point blank fired from the AK47s, throwing charges inside the command and control fire direction center bunkers. We captured their plans. I'm much more aware of how they go about it now and hopefully we've arrived at some improved methods of coping with this highly sophisticated, ^{suicide}certainly daring/sapper attack of our fixed positions.

These attacks have served to build up U.S. casualties. But ^{as}now here / ^{the activity}April moves on,/has calmed down; our casualties have fallen off. But the NVA are capable of doing this, say, once a month--of increasing our casualties by commitment of

their forces. They really did not commit any major divisional/forces in Quang Tri Province, only their separate screening regiments. No doubt they had planned to commit a division or so in the mountains west of Hue and Quang Tri,

We noted their opening of the road into A Shau Valley and the use of the road south of Khe Sanh. We launched DEWEY CANYON to capture their forward supplies and their artillery in that area. And then again, south of Khe Sanh in MAINE CRAG where we have now captured their hoard of rice and some further ammunition and explosives.

So it could be concluded from this that we're now in a posture where we totally control Quang Tri Province. However, we cannot lower our guard or decrease our forces one iota so long as the enemy retains his total sanctuary in Laos and in and above the DMZ. You can count up to 18 or 19 regimental-size forces around the edge within a night's march of the Ben Hai River, around Quang Tri, and you can compare this with the two--just two--South Vietnamese regiments which we have in Quang Tri Province. So it's apparent that there cannot be much of a reduction in the American force in Quang Tri Province until the North Vietnamese Army is defeated or is withdrawn through negotiations. You know, the negotiation route does not look hopeful from my observation of the activities here. I think we've convinced the NVA in our recent approach to this problem that he can continue from now on inserting his forces in some modest numbers about once a month to increase our casualty

rate, raise the concern of people in the States--newspaper headlines detrimental to our cause. We are truly in a stalemate condition here in Quang Tri Province insofar as dealing with the North Vietnamese Army is concerned so long as he has a total sanctuary to the north and to the west.

So that leads to the question: what to do about it? I've heard it argued that we have really no choices; we either have to resume the bombing up north or we have to continue what we're doing. Continuation of what we're doing I see as no profit--no end in sight. Resume the bombing up north--not decisive; was not before, would not be again. In fact, overall it would probably be a losing proposition for us. So that leaves only some way to get after his regular forces. His regular forces are within reach, just outside the borders, and we could contest him on that basis. In fact, almost under the present ground rules, security of our forces--it could be argued--that anything within 122mm gun range of border is a threat and therefore we'll go and destroy it. This would be a positive action; it would be a clearcut policy; it would be defensive and, it would be a first step towards defeat of the North Vietnamese Army and the removal of his status of total safety in his sanctuary. So of all the plans and schemes discussed to date, my experience here in Quang Tri Province would lead me to say that: a violation of his sanctuary is the most profitable, meaningful, and decisive course of action open to us from a military

standpoint. And it's difficult to see how, from a political standpoint, ^{it} ^{as} would be as disastrous/either continuing what we're doing or by resuming the bombing in the north.

There are a number of lessons learned which are contained in some detail in other tapes and in other writing. We have been exploring a number of things which have caused us concern. We've lost some listening posts recently where they were overrun and all killed. We are exploring how this happened; are the listening posts too much in fixed positions, too well known, too little camouflaged, not enough stealth, are they asleep? What has happened to these listening posts? And it's this kind of problem that we are wrestling with at all times. We get people together and talk about them and see if we can discover how best to cope with these problems.

A major step has been taken--just yesterday in fact--to resolve some of the problems we've had with air support.

We have established all kinds of records in terms of helicopter lift and helicopter support, utilization rates--everything--and we have outstanding pilots, well-trained, all weather trained. We have good helicopters, well instrumented. A lot of heroic deeds; really a fine on-going group of aviators and good airplanes. However, there ^{wrong} has been something/with the system. It has led us to too many bad days.

I was convinced from the beginning when we launched into ^{and} our mobile posture/ General Hill came up to stay; so long as he was here we were solving problems. And he was recalled down below the pass. The longer he stays away the more problems are generated.

It was proposed last October that we establish a wing command echelon north of the pass that could deal with the 3d Marine Division. This was not approved.

In each of our major operations when we got into serious trouble with weather or other problems, a specific request for General Hill to come up and stay a while would be honored, and ^{help} this would soon/ease the problem. However, except during the presence of General Hill, the division commander has been forced to deal with agents of the wing and agents of III MAF who were not in a position to make any decision short of going to Da Nang. ^{was} This was unworkable. It/claimed that the perfect communication from here to Da Nang solved all the problems. This is not the way that problems are going to be solved. As one example: As the day reaches its end and the helicopter lifts are only partially done, there comes a time of reckoning as to what we must get done in the remaining time. The ground commander goes to work on this problem, decides what must be done, turns to the aviation control agencies to ask that it be done; and at that time--almost too late--the negotiations begin concerning the air support. Whereas if an air commander were present, he could participate from the beginning in the thinking about the problem and in the resolution of the problem, and come to his decision along with the ground commander so that when the ground commander decided: this is the way we'll go--the air commander could say: "We're with you."

Too often during the discussion over long communications lines it got dark, so nothing was done. It has not been a good arrangement to attempt to conduct a air/ground team effort up here with the air part of the team having no authority. Our attempt to live with this situation has led to a lot of misgivings on the part of the ground officers and a lot of concern on the part of the aviators because there was a continuing irritating problem. I'd like to reiterate: None of this stemmed from the young aviators themselves, their skill, daring, bravery; the airplanes they fly are fine. The system did not adequately provide for provisions to take care of the current situation. Happily it's now being changed.

Helicopter problems in general--we don't have a good mix. We must have a scout ships. This opinion is not unanimous, I recognize, but I have personally gone through this for a year now with the Army and with the Marines. I know the value of these things; I watched them operate. I see us operate without them, and there's just no substitute--no way out of it. We must have these scout ships because they will pay for themselves in short order in terms of saving our helicopters and saving lives: a very inexpensive insurance investment.

End Side 1, Tape 1

Begin Side 2, Tape 1

Next, we need some more powerful helicopters for ^{our} command and control. I ^{would} personally ride every day in an Army Hotel model helicopter; I'm not happy with it. I would rather ride with Marines. But the Army bird has 300 horsepower more than the Marine ^{version.} / It can go into landing zones / the Marine bird cannot go into. In fact I've been put into landing zones with the Marine ^{helicopter} / and it was unable to get me out. I had to wait until we could call the Army ⁱⁿ to get me out. So this is not an iffy problem at all; it's a real and serious problem. And failing to provide these better helicopters is risking the life of our commanders every day.

On the other hand, the Hotel bird has Army pilots, Army crews; they're not all-weather trained. They do not have TACAN, so they're not well instrumented. So again, we're not providing the commanders with the kind of aircraft he should have in order to run this mobile war.

Ideally, a few Hotel models with Marine pilots, Marine crew, Marine instrumentation would solve this problem and solve it quickly and satisfactorily. I've been over the clouds in a Huey Hotel with the Army crew, and have been told that GCA was not working, 10 minutes worth of fuel; over the clouds . . . how do you get down? Well this time, fortunately, we found a small hole out over the ocean and got down through. No excuse for this kind of thing in my view. The Marine Corps should take better care of its command and control obligations to its field commanders.

our
 Gunships limit our operations every day: /patrols that should go in don't go in, moves that should be made are not made, resupply that needs to be inserted is not inserted. Every day a constant problem--^{shortage} / of gunships. We've been forced to call on the Army for help repeatedly in the gunship area and in the heavy lift area; of course, this latter is because of our problem with the CH-53 and our inability to get enough of these flying to satisfy our requirements for artillery ammunition and the like.

We have many other problems throughout the Marine Corps which we need to look seriously at. We studied a requirement for helicopter transportable 8-inch howitzers. This is primary for counter-battery. As we exposed our units along the Laotian border, ^{found that enemy} we / 122mm guns are not very accurate; one estimate said: a thousand rounds were fired at Fire Base Cunningham; only three or four hit it. 8-inch / ^{which} move close enough to these guns can outshoot them. However, we have no way of getting the 8-inch into the hills.

We must look immediately to our entire artillery mix. Certainly we need the 175 guns or some long-range counter-battery weapon. Do we need the self-propelled 155? Well maybe a few. But if we're going to a mobile concept, we don't need this kind of heavy equipment and we should relook at the requirement.

We had a recent interesting experiment with the ONTOS. With the CH-54 we lifted the ONTOS down south of Khe Sanh

some 15 miles into an area where they could operate. We have not fully exploit^{ed}/the armor of the ONTOS because too much attention was given to using it in a defensive role. We needed a different weapon on it: twin 40s or some other weapon where it ^{could} be used in an offensive role to run against these small bunkers where the NVA are prone to hold their fire 'til the Marines are close enough so they can shoot them right between the eyes. This little bit of armor plate, light-weight, might well be worth considering as--in a modified form--possibly as an assault weapon to insert with the infantry in rolling terrain which is inaccessible to tanks. The helicopters can put the ONTOS in based on our experience with it. So this is an area we need to study.

Engineer equipment: the little Case, lightweight equipment is fine. A lot of power, easy to use. We need an abundance of these so that we can move our artillery quickly, we can dig our CPs and our FDCs and our dumps--everything in quickly. We need many more of these. And with a mobile concept, we will naturally need many less of the larger dozers and other heavy equipment.

To explore the future concept a little bit: in my view, having watched this developed and seen the results, certainly we need to look carefully at the Navy's sea-based ideas. For example, here in Quang Tri Province ^{if} everything were afloat except Vandegrift and areas ^{beyond,} we could eliminate all the defense of many bases: the road network, the off-loading

effort, the handling of supplies up through the Cua Viet into the dumps, out of the dumps onto the trucks, out the roads to Vandegrift, off-loading at the dumps, loaded again over to the LSA, and finally hooked up by the helicopter. So when the Navy comes along with a sea-based concept--helicopters lifting 25 tons from the ship--all we need is a portable type installation at shore such as Vandegrift out in the heart of the action. This cuts the helicopter turn-around for our tactical helicopters and our resupply helicopters. Everything else at sea--the division headquarters could be at sea; all the repair facilities at sea; the logistics, dumps, communications--everything at sea. Cut our force down considerably from that which we have now. In particular also, if the Navy would man the heavy lift helicopters and deliver the goods ashore, we wouldn't need something like Vandegrift.

Our operations ashore would extend in for 60-80 miles--very handily. And our base being at sea could be built up or cut down to meet the situation. Maybe initially in a counter-insurgency effort, a few ships could come by to help the local forces, the local government on a modest scale. Then as the situation, if it heats up, you bring more forces. And finally, a force such as the 3d Marine Division could operate from ships off shore to completely control the military situation throughout Quang Tri Province very handily.

This would mean, of course, that when the time came you could put your full force in without awaiting the build-up of

the installation of the shore which was necessary in Vietnam. We prolonged our build-up to such a degree that our people at home were tired of the war before we got in it. It's only in the last few months that our full force got into Vietnam. The 1st of the 5th Mechanized Brigade was landed here from the States about September.

So in our thinking about what we're doing here, we should go back and work over our total concepts and then design a force to meet the requirements: how many LVTs? Well, if our major force is going to be helicopter borne, maybe we need a minor number of LVTs. Beaches would not be important any more. Probably the worst thing you could do would be to land on a beach; so much better to land on a crag somewhere out behind the enemy's installations and insert your artillery, work your troops down the hills toward him.

Communications can be built into the ships--the major communications--stay in the ships, part of the ships. Motor transport could be reduced if we're not going to use roads. Already we have our back lots full of jeeps that are not needed, not used by the infantry--no use for them. We're still using our cargo trucks because we're hauling four or five hundred tons a day from Dong Ha, Quang Tri out to Vandegrift. If the large helicopters take over this task, certainly many of the trucks could be left at home.

A complete exploration of all of our organizations and their equipment will bring us to a point where we can launch ashore and fully support our efforts from the sea by helicopter

with only a small portable base such as Vandegrift in the central area of our major effort.

Vandegrift is complete, of course: 10 days supplies for two regiments, two helicopter refueling farms, helicopter rearming, command and control, DASC, ASRAT, communications centrals, fire support coordination commanding general and his staff, a medical facility with one operating room, two regimental headquarters areas, an airstrip now being developed but not essential, the lift-off pad and the LSA. All this is in such condition that it could be moved say 50 miles down south very, very quickly just by heavy lift helicopters--you just pick it up and move.

We need portable bunkers that these helicopters can lift around. We've done some of that. On Hill 950 we have a whole series of bunkers prepared for this year-round permanent outpost where we have sensor readout, all on a pinnacle protected by a rifle platoon. We've assembled bunkers down at Vandegrift and lifted them up on the top by helicopter, and they stacked the sandbags around them. So here, again, a portable approach to the whole operation is essential.

So if we learn any lesson in this, it is: that we do have a winning combination in the present mobile approach. It maximizes our capability, takes most advantage of our technical and industrial production in terms of helicopters and fire power. The NVA is unable to cope with it; he's on foot. We blanket him with forces all around him, break up his formations, he has to stash his supplies before he can launch any

kind of a heavy assault; we're on his trails, we're in his hideaways, in his dumps. So that the guerrilla, to rely on any kind of a sanctuary, will find that his fate is sealed--he's not going to be able to operate against these kinds of tactics. We can find him wherever he goes. Particularly with recent developments in such things as the sensors, our patrols can stick sensors around. With the varied combination of sensors we can tell pretty much what we have; we immediately insert patrols in the area to check it out. On any target worthwhile, we insert forces to destroy it.

More than any other war in which I have been involved, this is a war against enemy forces. We, in large measure, ignore the terrain. Of course, there are many particulars where we must put our artillery on a defensible crag and we try to put our forces on top of the hill to work their way down. But in the main we go where the enemy trails are, where the enemy caches are, where we know the enemy is--his troops or his facilities or his supplies. And this is where we apply our force directly and precisely against the enemy; bypassing whole mountain ranges, bypassing the high ground--ignoring the terrain in general terms in order to get precisely at the enemy force.

This is another indication of the tremendous advances being made in the intelligence field. We should explore very carefully the entire intelligence collection effort, the analysis and the utilization which has given this capability to us to precisely attack the enemy on a timely

basis in the recent months during this war.

The logistics effort has been excellent. It's amazing to me that through all these many months of requiring 100, 200, 300, 400 tons a day lifted out of Vandegrift, that I'm not aware of any serious shortage of supplies in Vandegrift itself. We've had some troubles getting some of it out into the hills, but there's been a consistency in the movement of supplies which is all to the great credit of the logisticians. The highway from Dong Ha to Vandegrift has been closed only twice--two days, rather--and this^{is}/because the floods washed the bridge out; not closed from enemy action. The convoys have been constant; 400-500 tons a day over the road. Supplies have been there when we needed them. This in spite of the fact that everything is transshipped up from Da Nang. They overcome troubles on the seas, troubles on loading priorities and so forth. All in all, they have kept the supplies forward where they were needed.

The most rewarding part of my tour in Vietnam has been the opportunities I've had to visit with Marines on the trail. It's unbelievable what these fine young Americans can and will do in terms of seeking out and destroying the enemy, and in terms of taking care of one another, in terms of their loyalty, their great skills, their outlook--almost unbelievable. And it's reassuring to me to realize that these are the young Americans who will lead the next generation. Our country is going to be in good hands. We cannot do enough for these

young men. They stay on the trail sometimes for 60 days at a stint, and are happy with their lot. They get a little unhappy at their unit leader because he will not let them eat their long-range patrol ration; they have to carry that for emergency. And yet here they are about to come back into the base after 40 or 50 days and they still haven't had a chance to eat that. They get^{to}/thinking about eating it. So it's these kind of things that concern them; things that are really of no consequence. They've gone without food--the weather closes in--they do go without food. I've been into units that have been without food for a number of days. They're still toughing it out, take what they can get, accept the fact that we are doing our best to take care of them--just simply great! ^{It's} /just beyond my capability to describe how great these young Marines really are.

We're doing some things to try to help. I have a program now for taking them down to the beach. Cua Viet beaches are some of the best in the world-- good surf, good clean white sand. On a sunny day we take a battalion of infantry down the river in boats (we utilize the empty boats returning after they've brought supplies to us) let them out at a little the/tent camp we have there with the mess set-up, the reefers full of beer, the PX loaded with goodies, show movies, band concert, surf, athletic gear, everything. And they're told; now until the day after tomorrow you don't have a single responsibility to do anything except relax and enjoy yourself.

Of course, it's really the first time the battalion has been that close together since normally we're in company size operations out here; the companies are always on different hills, rarely see one another. The battalion commander's delighted to have his outfit together. The troops are delighted. And in 2 days they're ready to go again. The recuperative power, again, is amazing! For some of them this would be--when we first started this scheme--for some of them the first movie they'd seen and the first PX they've been in, and they've been in-country for 5 months.

Again, it shows you how much the infantry trooper can cope with so long as he has a sense of accomplishment, which these troops have. Even when they're not finding anything on the trail, there's a great adventure involved in the going into the territory that no one's been in before, walking down the NVA trails, poking around in the NVA bunkers and hide-aways, finding a little stuff here and there, picking up some Bru tribesmen, chasing tigers--there's always a great adventure and a great feeling of accomplishment which keeps them going.

Another problem I might mention briefly, and it requires a lot of work--responsiveness of fire support. Too often it takes too long to get the fire support laid on and delivered where it's needed. General Carney out in Task Force Hotel drops in on the company commanders and will tell them, "I want you to shoot at that place over there with artillery to see if, through such testing we can somehow improve the responsiveness of artillery and air support."

Looking back to World War II and Korea, I seem to remember it being much more responsive than it is now. Of course we had more of it; we had more artillery. So it could be committed to units in a better fashion, so that a patrol could use artillery to navigate with. And as the company was set in in the evening, he could fire in around his position ^{keep} and/air on station. Any way you hack it, air on station is more available than air on the pad. We've experimented some with air to air refueling to keep air on station.

But there is an area that we haven't explored in the detail that we need to, but there's an area where I have a generally uneasy feeling that we're not as responsive in the fire support area as we need to be. This pops out now and then. And an example where somebody took 35 minutes to get the first round of artillery. ^{lapses} These/are all explored, we ^{for failure.} ^{that} find the reasons/ Still this uneasy feeling/we need to do much better.

In the main, communications have been outstanding. We've been able to talk by telephone to regimental command posts from Dong Ha 30 miles down south of Vandegrift in Dewey Canyon. Colonel Barrow comes in loud and clear on the telephone, as an example. This isn't entirely true in the covered circuits, and we need to work at improved, secure communications. I understand some improvements are just over the horizon.

The night observation devices have paid off handsomely. We need more. We have concluded in recent months that the system of issuing a lot of this special equipment to infantry battalions was not a profitable one. Battalions can use it in some situations and in others they cannot. So in the fixed positions we have organized special ground surveillance teams, assigned them to the job permanently, and given them the equipment. It is under tight control and it is being used by experts. This is not the total solution. We took some numbers out of the infantry battalions to do this. It seems to be working very well indeed.

There are a number of sophisticated developments in terms of detection of artillery, mortars, the sound ranging, the flash. It reached a point where every time the enemy opened up, he lost some of his guns. Our 8-inch fire for effect on the second round; AO photos show that we are getting hits. We need to look further at this type of counter-battery effort. And again, we need helicopter transportable 8-inch. . . . I'm hoping that we'll get another look at the towed version that we had in Korea, possibly with some modifications, get it where it's helicopter transportable. Then we could get it back into the areas where we're subjected to fire from north of the DMZ or from Laos against our positions. We have no adequate counter-battery particularly, when the weather is closed and the TacAir cannot operate. The 8-inch appears from my experience to be an unbeatable counter-battery weapon if you can get it up close.

Side 1, Tape 2

I would make a strong plea for fully manned infantry organizations. In spite of our best effort we have a hundred and ninety odd Marines on the rolls of the rifle company, but we have only a hundred sixty to seventy effectives. Counted among these effectives will be some coming and some going for R&R and leave, some light duties; the administrators in the rear which, obviously, shouldn't count. But we would be much better off if we could have a full package of infantry. In our experience after a couple of skirmishes, they start to get down to such strength that casualties accumulate once they lose their organizational structure. They have mutually supporting elements, their formations break down, then the casualties build very rapidly. The only possible solution to this is to start out with our infantry formations up to strength, plus enough additional infantry in the pipeline so that when the action starts, the replacements can step forward. We found this in World War II because we went on our operations with a 5 percent or 10 percent overstrength available in formations used initially as labor. We went into battle with a back-up immediately available. In Vietnam we've been unable to do that--unable to keep our infantry formations up to strength. At times a crash program is required because a company will get down close to a hundred after a few days of sharp action, catching a lot of mortars and so forth. The pipeline is just not responsive enough to haul the replacements

in when you're hauling the casualties out; and that's the only effective way you can run this kind of a war. You need a pool of replacements stashed away when you go into active operations. We have not done that. And having been the G-1 in Washington recently, I recognize why. But I say: In the future planning we should make every effort to have the number of replacements necessary to keep our formations up to strength.

Another area which would bear exploration is the Army's approach to medevac, it's so-called "dust-off" system. Where we have used it Marines have been impressed by the competency of the crew and the pilots who apparently have had some medical training and experience. The powerful Hotel model Huey can get in and out of tight places and carry heavy loads, a crew aboard that talks to the doctors on the way back in. Sometimes they are actually met at the aircraft LZ with some necessary treatments which increase the opportunity for life saving. The common argument is that we can't afford to get such specialized efforts going; however, within our means we can do some specialized training on some of our aviation personnel to come forth with some kind of improved medical package.

In closing, I'm particularly pleased to be going to Quantico to the Education Center. It is hoped that some of the ideas developed in the 3d Marine Division operations over the past year can be translated into concepts for the future; and to me the outlook is very bright. I see no reason why the Marine Corps and the Navy are not on the threshold of a great

advancement in terms of providing the nation with an ideal force for whatever troubles brew anywhere about the world, at whatever level, at whatever place, and whatever time frame. So I'm hopeful that I can help to launch this effort at a very early date and help to see it through.

End of interview

U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Debrief of Major General Raymond G. Davis, USMC
at Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, Pearl Harbor,
Hawaii on 15 April 1969

Tape 1

Introduction by LtGen H. W. Buse, Jr., CG, FMFPac: We're looking forward to the pleasure of having you tell us on your experience out there over the past year which, for all intents and purposes, have been outstanding. And if anything in a way in which you think we can improve here to help III MAF and the 3d Division, don't hesitate to pull any punches. So with that, you're on the air. We are recording it.

Davis: It would be easier for me to make it a map talk.
(cross talk while map is set up)

Those of you who have visited the 3d Marine Division in recent times have heard much of this, but I would just take a few minutes to review where we've been and where we are in the 3d Division, and use that as a backdrop to talk about some of the problems involved and some of the lessons learned.

We do have the total of Quang Tri Province. This alone has been an improvement in that, previously, when the Cavalry

Division had this much of it, leaning on Quang Tri, there was some difficulty coordinating our efforts with the province. The ^{is a} chief./Cavalry Division/ very aggressive outfit. It was always in the province chief's office doing something unilaterally that caused me a little problem/keeping apprised ⁱⁿ of what was going on. So the departure of the Cav gave us the entire province so that the 3d Division worked closely with the province organization; and this is better.

As we took on this additional ten kms of real estate, we made some changes in dispositions. First, those of you who have been there know about the terrain: the coastal region with interlacings of sand and rich delta land, which is washed down by the rivers; the piedmont, useful primarily for military bases,

(most of our bases--Quang Tri base being an exception--are on land that's of no real value to the Vietnamese). They graze a few cattle, they quarry a few rocks by hand to sell to our engineers, and they produce a little charcoal; otherwise it's not productive/ ^{land.} Then the mountains. I mention these three general ^{areas because} / totally different types of operations are run in the three areas.

Our forces generally: The 1st of the 5th Mechanized Brigade, as you know, it's a foot infantry battalion with four companies; it's a mech infantry battalion with three companies and APCs; and a tank battalion and self-propelled artillery battalion; and a massive overhead -- almost 5,000 people with seven rifle company-type elements. It has

done a very fine job, and I'll talk about it later. And there's the two ARVN regiments: The 2d ARVN Regiment astride the highway up to the DMZ and the 1st ARVN Regiment, normally Quang Tri but with a tactical CP down at a place called Nancy on the province south boundary.

In the eyes of the ARVN, these are just temporary fire control-type boundaries. The division commander considers that the 2d ARVN is responsible for the north part of Quang Tri Province; the 1st ARVN Regiment is responsible for the rest of it. So the regimental commanders are looked to for what's going on throughout; this causes some complications but not a great deal. Relationships are the best.

General Truong, the division commander, is a fine tactician, a fine leader, very intelligent. He has decreed that half of each regiment will stay out in the hills. The 2d Regiment actually has five battalions, but they have one of them at a training school all the time. They employ four large battalions (four rifle companies per battalion), the biggest formation in the Vietnamese Army. He wants to keep two of them out in the hills, and we normally try to accommodate that. This means, of course, Marine helicopter support and some Army choppers, utilization of our facilities. We provide him with jump CPs at Vandegrift. We encourage the 101st Airborne to help move the one down south even though at times the penalty is--if it is a penalty--

that the airborne will want a boundary change so they can run that ARVN operation. And of course we deploy the three Marine regiments: the 9th Marines, the 3d Marines, the 4th Marines.

The enemy situation in the last year has changed dramatically in that almost five regular NVA divisions have been through Quang Tri Province, three at Khe Sanh. 304th, 325 Charlie came in during the siege, 325 went out late March--suffering /some damage from the bombing. In late May the 308th came in, entered down here. They developed a new road and it moved into this area. We thought to reinforce; /turned out to be a replacement.

When they moved in we launched the first of our high mobility operations--our regiments down in the middle of them, ROBIN NORTH and ROBIN SOUTH operations, the 1st Regiment working north, the 4th Regiment working south with 3/9 attached. It was a very successful operation. The 304th departed as this was going on; it had been very seriously hurt. You might have heard / of Foxtrot Ridge. The enemy mission Jim apparently was to cut Highway 9. Young Lieutenant/Jones at Foxtrot Ridge one night piled up 238 on the wire, right in this area. The enemy was hurt a number of times, to the extent that the 304th was severely punished, and left. 308th, fresh down from Hanoi, received similar treatment much faster. In 2 weeks time, in serious actions up here and against /3/4 down here, four out of the six battalions they brought into the country

were largely destroyed. We captured a battalion commander, the radios, the mortars, and machine guns; killed 700 of them. And they went away. By mid-June these three divisions were gone, and have been gone. It's important to realize they've been gone long enough now to have been fully refurbished and retrained.

324 Bravo, as you recall, back in Helicopter Valley-- HASTING's days--finally split up into separate regiments and went south for Tet a year ago. These regiments were badly chewed up by the 101st and the Air Cav. The 90th Regiment still appears to be south of Da Nang somewhere. The other two regiments went back north in the early fall.

The 320th Division was more persistent. It came down in April and again in May. In April--a massive attack against it at Dai Do. We brought a cavalry brigade out of Khê Sanh, we had a battalion from the Americal, we had 15 Marine bat-
plus were launched
talions up here at this time, /ARVN. Massive assault/against
It
it. / went away on the 12th of May. It was gone just 9
days and came back to welcome me the night I took command of
the 3d Division into this same area. This time, without too
much difficulty, we were able to cordon off two of its forma-
On
tions, and partially cordoned off another. /the last of May
it left. We captured a company sergeant; he said his com-
pany had 90 people in it, 62 of them had just joined.
Another NCO said the new people were not permitted to talk to
the old people before they came down. So this was not much

of a formation. Late April through late May they left almost 3800 dead on the battlefield. This division was gone until August, when they came back north of the Rock Pile. This operation you can read about in the Marine Corps Gazette.

Briefly, the 3d Marines screening companies caught it here. We committed the 3d Marines against the 64th Regiment, inserted two battalions of the 9th. Pretty well chewed it up. The 9th moved to Vandegrift then out to an area west of the Rock Pile, where it was apparent the enemy was caching supplies--their main supply effort in the mountains, that is; the first big one we found high in the mountains.

The 52d Regiment with the 48th in trace came down again. The 3d Marines pressed against them and put three battalions on Mutter's Ridge above them and among them. As they broke up, prisoners said they were ordered to get back across the river. We put two more battalions on the banks of the Ben Hai, as you recall. These two battalions were working south. We launched the 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry--our foot infantry from the Army brigade--in the DMZ to move westward. Two ARVN battalions in here moving west. 3d Marines, 9th Marines, 1/4, 2/26--a massive effort against this formation. Arc Lights, a number in here, here some against the artillery up here, massive air and artillery. Never once did we really encircle a sizeable unit--just small units. However, we found on the battlefield some 1568 bodies--some of them in mass graves near the Arc Light sight--and got all their supplies and equipment: 28,000

mortar rounds and 5,000 mines and so forth, out of these hills. So this division is gone and hasn't been back.

There's ^{been} no divisional formation ^{recent} here since mid-October.

Our/efforts have been against separate screening regiments --and you're familiar with those--the 138th normally around here with the 270 behind and sometimes replacing it; the 27th along here; the 246th now along here, it has been down as far as Khe Sanh in a screening effort, bringing in small caches, furnishing mortar crews and rocket crews to the little local forces--this kind of activity. ^{general screening} This/activity hadn't really changed; the bombing halt did not change the operation of these regiments one iota. I'm not sure they know where this line is. One time they'll stash supplies just inside, next time just outside, sometimes astride the DMZ. Capture them and they're still wet from crossing the river. So there's been no change in this operation. In February they got more aggressive: launched their sappers against our bases, started more active resistance, more mortar fire, and so forth. Other than this aggressiveness in their so-called offensive, there's been no change.

As you know, there's been a separate 6th and 9th Regiments down here near the 6th and 7th front. We've brushed against those only during Dewey Canyon. 31st Local Force Group, ^{to} headquartered up here, with 8/10 local force companies that seem to operate in and out on a rotational basis--maybe

six or eight of them at a time--operating down in the area. Right now, other than these screening regiments, there's virtually no enemy in Quang Tri Province. The interior is pretty secure.

Our operations have been an all-out effort towards mobility; and this has meant economy of force. As you know, we've closed A-3, C-3, Carroll, Ca Lu, Shepherd, Khe Sanh--
or
to generate infantry. We have no infantry in Dong Ha/ Quang Tri. Until recently we had no infantry out here at the mouth of the Cua Viet. After the phasedown of the amtracs, we now have an infantry battalion out here which serves two purposes; one is rehab on the beach for two of its companies after an extended period in the hills, and the other two companies providing some security. This is for 4 or 5 days then we rotate the battalions from the hills. 3/3 was there when I left.

We've gone to company-size operations. I know you've seen the plots where we operate in companies. And just to illustrate what's happening: A company will be put into an area two or three kms on a side, they'll cut an LZ for resupply and medevac, and they'll work day and night activities until they've thoroughly searched out this area. By thoroughly searching out I mean: on every trail, every hill knob, every draw, every finger--total search-out of the area. Then they'd be lifted to another place. Typical example of this, if you've seen the 9th Marines plot, it's just like a massive spiderweb of company day and night actions as they finish this off.

I remember a conversation between Sonny Lane who has 3/9 and Bob Barrow with the regiment, when Sonny says, "Colonel, we are ready to move and establish a fire base over here. I've already selected the tentative site." And of course the next process is: the regimental commander and his artillery officer, engineer, helicopter people, and so forth will get in a chopper and go out and settle on a precise position.

But then Colonel Barrow said to him, "Well I just saw your plot, Sonny. You've got two more places I want you to look over here while we're starting to prep this new fire base." So it is a very careful design of being sure that we know exactly what's in the area.

To go down a ridge, a company will seize a nob, cut an LZ, search out the fingers; and the next company to pass through, will seize the next nob, cut an LZ for resupply and medevac, search out the fingers, and so forth until when they finish a ridge it has been thoroughly worked and it does have a series of LZs, and we can go back into it quickly.

Other things giving us mobility, of course as you know, are the familiar fire support bases. We must have fifty or sixty now throughout the whole area. A precise dictate was 8 kilometers apart. This gives you a little overshoot for mortars on the other side. Rifle companies will always be within 8 clicks of their light artillery. To get to Dewey Canyon you go from Ca Lu to Henderson to Tun Tavern to Shiloh

to Razor to Cunningham to Turnage. Of course, when you get two mutually supporting ones you cut off everything behind. Actually you leapfrog it down. This means that you can go anywhere within helicopter range with the direct support artillery covering. We've been back in many of them many times. Henderson down here we've been in five times. Down south we don't have much problem; our AO goes in for a close look, put a recon team in, no sign of activity so you put your troops in and your artillery follows.

Up north we were having problems with booby traps and mines, so we would assume that everything up here will require some--at least a soft ordnance type--prep before we take a look at it with patrols. Recently out here we ended up in an all-out assault to get into

Argonne. And it stayed so hot that finally we had to put rifle companies down in the open areas to walk up to clean out the mortars and so forth around it.

Next thing that's giving us mobility is our reconnaissance effort, and I'll talk about sensors at the same time. We do have four or five strings of sensors around Gia Lin, with a readout there; around Con Thien, A-41 out there; here, Dong Ha Mountain, on Fuller; along/ 950 north to Khe Sanh; in here. Trying to get more down here. We're running into some frequency problems: you get on too high a ground such as our recon readout station--or relay station--up here then

you start to get readings from other places. So there's a little bit of mechanics that we have to work out. Then the air dropped ones, which are read out by the airborne platform, where we're unable to read them out line of sight with our ground stations. Between the sensors and the air observers, the helicopter pilots flying around, ^{if} any one gives us an indication of enemy activity, the next step is to put the recon in. Recon goes where we think the enemy is. Recon battalion plus recon company--I try to keep 35 teams on the ground in the DMZ, down the entire area: interior, along the river--35 teams. This is sometimes difficult, particularly in bad weather. Gun ships, I guess, are the major problems of getting recon teams in; so much so that we've had to go through a lot more walk-ins than you like to do. Without gun ships you can put them in a nearby base and walk them in. This means you lose a day or two getting them walked in where you want them. The recon--the last figure I saw--just over 60 percent of the recon teams had some kind of contact. So we do put them in where the enemy is.

The most spectacular results were a prelude to Maine Crag, where the team here would count the trucks, track vehicles coming in the road every night between 8 and 9, and going out every morning from 2 to 3. So we put more patrols over here; they still passed here. We put some up here.

They didn't come this far so we knew where the turnaround was. There were also
/some spectacular efforts in the DMZ which I know you heard about.

This high mobility has meant that we can go to economy of force-type operations in the flats. The 5th Mechanized Brigade, even though it has only seven rifle companies, covers well out into the hills, the piedmont, all the flats, and right now have attached to it two troops--the 3d and 5th Cavalry--are working in here. They just cut a road down to the Ba Long. We worked two tank companies and two mech companies out at Khe Sanh to work their way all the way down through here, now trying to work their way out here--gives us a different capability. The ARVN works all over also. This ARVN regiment has worked with us in here; two operations west of the Rock Pile. They've been to Khe Sanh with us three different operations. They've been to Dewey Canyon with us, Da Nang, and Mainé Crag. Same way with this regiment.

Of course the enemy has largely gone. But the gain for General Abrams has been that: where we had 24 U.S. battalions in here including tanks, amtracs--this time last year--we now have 12. So we gained a sizeable reduction in U.S. force; some increase in ARVN, of course.

The absence of the enemy has meant that we went to work in early December on an all-out effort to clean out the infrastructure and guerrillas, pacification. The ARVN committed half of their units, about a battalion, sometimes a battalion and a half of a brigade, up to two

battalions of Marines in the pacification effort. I'll just talk about a couple of those.

One, Cam Lo. A serious problem. Every night, difficulties. The VC were meeting in the village; they were getting mortars, mines, booby traps, snipers. I've scouted that. Even though they had three RF companies and six PF platoons in here, not a single ambush outside their immediate area. The same way down here--problems.

So I put the 2d Battalion, 3d Marines in here with a mission to run on a test basis^{for} about 90 days: What can we do to upgrade these local forces? The CP moved right in with the Cam Lo District headquarters, put one rifle company with the RF companies,

a Marine fire team with the RF squads, The platoon leader was the advisor for the RF Company commander, the company commander was the advisor for the command group over the three companies. And the same way down in Mai Loc. And in just over 60 days we had the RF companies operating across the river to the north. One night we had 88 night ambushes out around the area. It killed a lot of VCs; VCs were no longer meeting in the village. Some were double agents; reported they can't even find their old contacts around the area--just gone.

The district chief himself--I had concluded he had to be relieved /because he was ineffective. Now he's fine: he's gained a lot of confidence. He is a competent district chief. And

3 weeks ago at 4 o'clock in the morning, he actually led personally a reaction force out to here where we have a pretty good ambush going. So the hard charging district chief we're ^{very} / happy with. ^{We} /took the/ ^{Marines} out after about 90 days and didn't even. . . . As you can guess, the Marines needed to get back into more field type operations.

Now I'll just keep battalions in the general area, working with but separately from these units, and we're starting to put a few CAP teams back in. So this was kind of an accelerated, sudden CAP team effort in effect. But

if you have a problem area, you can really upgrade it in a hurry with this kind of approach. Of course, the amtracs worked with local forces out in here.

Next thing that brought the province around quickly were the cordon and search operations. Everybody went to work on them; usually U.S. around the outside, and the ARVN and local forces inside. Eighty thousand people were processed eyeball to eyeball in about 60 days. One example again: Cam Lo refugee area where people came from the DMZ out in here; somewhere they thought between six and ten thousand people. Turned out to be ten.

Colonel Giai, commander of the 2d ARVN, had a very precise system to this. And it was a one-shot system in that I don't think we would do it this way again: Marines around the outside, the ARVN moved in inside with the local forces. They went to the school yard to set up a joint CP,

a processing center. On the first day, after a little PA system ran around telling the people about what was going to happen, the first day he takes the draft age people collected up from throughout the village into the processing center. Colonel Giai was very attentive to the needs of the people to keep somebody in there who would be there all the time to keep down the thievery and the loss of valuables. And his system was very simple: He talks to them, he gives them a ration because they're going to be there through the noon meal. Then he has six or eight small booths set up that they walk past; and each one has a slit in it for people to look out and check the faces as they come by. He'd have the province intelligence people, the district intelligence people, his own private intelligence people, Chieu Hoi, prisoners, local friendly cadre, local officials--all sitting in there looking out through the cracks. So the people walk by, and anybody can finger any one, of course. When they're fingered, they tap on the wall and the armed soldier nearby pulls them back for the processing center, and whoever fingers them has to write down for Colonel Giai what he knows about him. And the last stop is the black list, where they check that off. Of course, on the first day, particularly, the next stop is the ARVN recruiting office where they have a choice of volunteering for the 2d ARVN Regiment or going down south to the draft center.

Then after that, on the subsequent day, they get shots, go through the medical facilities, both ARVN doctors, U.S. doctors, U.S. dentists. And they're entertained --our band, some ARVN shows-- propagandized, worked over most of the day; and some of them even stay at night for some causes that I was never sure of. But when they finished with them, he gives them a slip of paper which means they've been processed, with their ID number and everything on it; then they go home.

The next day it's the young women then the old women, the old men, the children. In 4 or 5 days he's processed 2,000 people through this thing. Then the last day when everybody's back home, then the ARVN police--everybody--goes through; and anybody that doesn't have a slip of paper, they force them back for another run.

Out of 80,000 they arrested 1600. Three hundred of these draft dodgers and deserters; another 500 were subsequently released, though, in Quang Tri after further processing.

They got some pretty big ones. They got the/chief of VC the valley--Mai Loc; two or three/village chiefs. They got VC the/recruiting officer for the whole east coast--and these kinds of takes. Most of them, of course, were just small fry who had been helping carry rice or something.

The effect was dramatic. Over 3200 people were processed up here in an area where ambush, mining, sniper fire on a continuing basis. After he processed it, arrested 180, we

had 3 weeks without a shot fired in this area. So he was getting out the trouble makers. And it seems to have paid off.

He used a little different system down in the 1st Regiment, but I won't go into that. They were only a little less effective. They actually went around and processed them on site instead of hauling them in.

Our work with the ARVN, I think, is best illustrated by a little speech that Colonel Giai made to me the day I left, and one of the few times I've seen a somewhat emotional Vietnamese; but he was a little bit emotional about it. He said as long as he had been there, this was the first time that his forces had been permitted to operate like regular forces: out in the hills, fully supported by helicopters, tanks, or whatever he needed. And that it had really done marvels for his troops. His troop morale, his troop outlook, everything was upgraded and he was just as happy as he could be about it.

The outlook, I think, is that this place is about as secure internally as it's ever going to be. Because as I was just telling Senator Tower that it compares favorably with many places I know in the United States insofar as levels of violence and security are concerned. (laughter)

The province chief, _____ actually went around through Quang Tri City at night to call on people--it was a very small group--worked at it 'til almost midnight. Nobody's taken me up on it, but I told a newspaper guy that I'd take

him up in a helicopter, would fly around, and if he would point to a hamlet I'll land there and walk/ ^{with} him through the hamlet. I guess it was fortunate for me and them, we haven't had to do that; but I'm convinced it could happen. I just don't think there are many places in Quang Tri Province that you couldn't go day or night. But running 24-hour traffic on the highway, only once ⁱⁿ 2 months do we have a problem. So it is secure inside.

With this optimistic view of what's inside, I'm pessimistic about what's outside. I think the threat outside has increased. I'm concerned that maybe the Reds are on to a system whereby they can run down here periodically and generate a lot of casualties for us as they did in February and early March, go back out fairly unhurt, refurbish themselves, ^{that} come back again. So/we could, for a long period, have this periodic hue and cry in the States about the casualty problem. And I just don't think that we can politically survive this very long. I'm concerned about the total sanctuary, as you know, even with the all-out air effort out here; it doesn't really seem to affect their operations. Now they are bringing in forces and their supplies down, it appears, retaining the sanctuary they have in North Vietnam and cutting right across the corner to get into Laos--scot free, right there. They are really being cut through here using the waterways.

I think the key to the success of Quang Tri Province--there are many--but I think the fact that we have pretty much countered the key precepts of the guerrilla. As you know, the guerrillas strike and run to a hideaway, a secure area.

He doesn't have that now. Marines are on his trails, in his hideaway, in his secure areas not only in the hills but doing the same thing here and the same thing out here. So it would seem to me that the guerrilla's going to have to rewrite his book because he cannot cope with the helicopter operation. ^{We're} really taking advantage of our industrial might now, in these kinds of operations--the sensors, the choppers, the heavy mobile fire power, and the like. So I'm convinced that, despite reports to the contrary, that the military can manage this kind of insurgency operation. And the only restriction is a political one which gives him sanctuary.

This sanctuary problem is important to the ARVN. I've heard General Lam say at Da Nang at a luncheon recently, he went right around the table and said, "How many NVA regiments are in Laos and north of the DMZ?" The Americans present counted up and said twenty-two.

He said, "Well how many ARVN regiments are opposing those twenty-two?" The number was ten or twelve. It appears ^{up north} dramatic: /14-15 versus two. The ARVN can't cope with that. Somehow we've got to reduce the outside threat before we can

realistically get out of the place. And I see this as the main overall problem.

Now, unless there's some part of this that somebody wants more on, I'll switch to specific problem areas.

Buse: Go ahead. Does anybody want to listen to more of the tactical part of it?

Davis: I will show you some arithmetic. . . . Can I have those slides?

I'll give you a little idea of what I think the net result of what we've done out there. The first one on the DMZ: In order to cope with the DMZ restriction, that is, one squad patrol inside and one platoon extraction force; I got Joe Hopkins' 2/4, put him at Con Thien, ^I/gave him control of the recon assets--helicopter reaction (reaction is the wrong word; it doesn't fit the definition) extraction force--because I want about 10 kms of the DMZ carefully examined around A-4. So he put about three division recon patrols right on the river and he put three rifle companies ^{one} along, just outside the DMZ with a fourth/ around Con Thien; and each company ran two or three squad-size patrols in. So he really saturated it. Then every time a shot was fired, we'd put in the extraction force. By definition, the extraction force had to head out. So he headed out on a zig-zag course using this. . . . And I explained all this to General Goodpasture, And I remember he thought it was great. But I haven't really violated the spirit of the thing.

This is what we found: not too many NVA, a few crew served weapons. But he was positioning in this south of the DMZ, primarily assault type stuff: RPGs, mortars, a little bit of antiaircraft support, grenades, TNT. So he was actually using the south part of the DMZ to stash his stuff as he'd come down and attack our roads and positions.

But this was a fairly brief period.

Now we were going to try to do that all across the DMZ but the action got too heavy, and the terrain in the mountains is such that it's a pretty high risk operation when you commit a squad and you commit a platoon if you're right in the middle of a hot spot. By the time you got permission from Saigon to get them out, they could be in serious trouble, although we did have sub rosa permission if we got in real trouble just to go and they'd cover for us. But it illustrates again: attempt to fight a war with a lot of political restriction.

(Next slide) I just want to show you our listing of Dewey Canyon. A couple hundred of the ⁱⁿ kills, really, were/mass graves; some of them had been there for a while, most of the trucks killed by air. A few of them we got when we got there-- road drilling equipment. These were the artillery prime and movers. We actually captured six 122s /four 85s. They got only two of them out; the others were destroyed as we approached. Saw some of them where they'd put a big charge

in the barrel and just blown the barrel apart and the breech apart. And air got six of these. Most of these were in their dumps although some of them had gotten on the trail. (I smuggled one of these back to Quantico. I say smuggled because nobody would tell me whether I could send it or not. So I got a sergeant and put him on it and told him to get it to Quantico.) (laughter)

(It's now at the Basic School.)

Most of this is Dewey Canyon; but I just want to show the size of the take in a 6-month period, 3-month period: grenades, mortars, ^{crew-served} / weapons, individual weapons, the rice. Now the artillery--most of this is 122 ammunition; most of this was the 152 we got up on the Ben Hai. A massive bicycle effort, apparently to get the gear from A Shau into the hills west of Hue. We took 2,000 bicycle tires and so forth. (Okay, slide out.)

Now this looks like of stuff, but when you consider the truck traffic in Laos, this is just a day or two of supplies he can haul down there. So we stopped his attempt to build a force inside the hill mass west of Hue/Quang Tri. He got the supplies down to A Shau then apparently he ran up here to position his rice. We got it and set back his effort in here; but as far as seriously hurting his logistic effort, I don't think we did seriously hurt it.

Problems: We suffered many, many times because we did not have the air part of the air/ground team up north. The

effort to run the air from Da Nang just didn't work. When it first started, General Hill was up there. It worked fine when he was there with enough authority to have it work. Then there was some concern about him spending too much time up there, so they took him back south. They talked in terms of the MAG-39 running it, but the problem was bigger than just helicopters. You've got the command and control problem, you've got the coordination of the tac air with the helicopters, you had helicopters coming up from down south who didn't have the exact ground rules that MAG-39 were working with, you had a massive aviation effort at Vandegrift and nobody in charge of it so to speak. So all this led to our proposal in October that we have some command structure up there. This did not get approved.

Then for Dewey Canyon I made another special plea and got General Hill back. During the bad weather it's absolutely essential. Then recently they have established north, General Hill/^{on a}pretty much permanent basis, as I understand it. And it's simply: this is the answer to the main problem. It's not just a question of command authority but it's a question of full time attention to the problems. By working with the ground commander, by anticipating the problem, the aviation side of it is getting the kind of attention that the ground side is getting. So I hope we never again try to run a division wing/^{team}without the air side of it present.

I could illustrate a few things; I will, just briefly.

At 4 o'clock in the afternoon--you had a bad day weatherwise; you haven't gotten the work done; the ground commander starts to reviewing his bare essentials of what he needs to get done and makes a decision: this has to be done before dark. And on a number of occasions, at 5 o'clock you start negotiating with a helicopter lift; you negotiate 'til dark and don't get a damn thing done. ^{If} /the air commander had been there through the process of the planning, negotiations going on all the time, it would have worked. Some of it was communications problems with Da Nang. It required a wing decision to run the helicopters overtime, for example--sometimes; this kind of thing. But two things: one is decision; the other, planning along the line. But I think as long as Homer Dan Hill was there, no problems. When he was not there, many problems. And he's there now.

Q: You must have had a very poor DASC.

Davis: Well, what's a DASC? It's an agency. I was dealing with agents and agencies. I wanted to deal with a commander.

Q: But they have some of this authority that you mentioned, if the aircraft had been allocated back to MAG-39.

Davis: The wing did not give them that kind of authority.

Q: Well, they should have.

Davis: Again, I was dealing with agents and agencies, and I wanted to deal with a commander, Danang's too far away. Because it's not a question of allocating tomorrow's resources or this afternoon's resources; it's a question sometimes of saying: there's a risk to the helicopters; we're going to get some of them shot. If we don't go, there's a great risk to the ground troops. So, are we going to go or not? How many helicopters will it cost me to get this done right now? With a competent air commander. . . . And I trusted General Hill explicitly; ^{and} / anything he told me I took--totally. If he said, "No, let's not go," that was enough. When you're dealing with a watch officer down at Da Nang, it's totally unsatisfactory. But I just don't see how we're going to go again without having a ground commander with an air commander to deal with, on the site, on the spot.

Helicopters: The 46s and the 53s, I think are good airplanes. And when the cards are really down--as I told many of the people at MAG-39 and elsewhere--when the going was really tough and we were against the wall, it was the Marines that got us out. Otherwise we relied heavily at times on the Army--Army heavy lift; even now, four or five CH-47s every day, Hotel model Hueys to insert our patrols. I had a Hotel model Huey assigned full time for my use. So-called pink team or Air Cavalry troop to work for us.

Now the problem with the light helicopters in my view is: of course, we've got one over there with inadequate power for the altitudes and the heat performance out there. I ride

in the Army bird in the hot days and the high ground. The Army crew does not have an all-weather capability and have not been trained; they don't have a tacan. So when the weather is bad I try to ride the Marine bird, but I've gotten out of Quang Tri, been put down on the hill and they couldn't get me off so they had to call the Army bird in to get me off. He got me back over the cloud bank; his ECA didn't work and so he sweated it out down to 10 minutes of fuel before he found a hole to get down. So my solution is simple: Marine Corps/Navy Hotel model with a Marine crew and tacan in it for the commanders out there.

I think we could save helicopters with use of the scout ships--the little scout bug. It's been demonstrated time and time again where they went in and found the 12.7s, found the enemy, and we've got fixed wing and artillery on them and clean it out, our 46s got in scot free. Other times you had as many as nine hits in one LZ, five of them right through the cockpit, inches from disaster; fortunately no one was hurt.

I fear that we bought the Cobra without the eyes that go with the Cobra. The eyes cost about \$50,000 a copy. I think the Marines are seriously considering getting the little bug to run security runs for our operations. And I've run into a lot of reluctance about it; but I've operated with them in the A Shau in our own operation, and I'm convinced that it's not--as some people claim--it's not a suicide mission at all.

It's a very worthwhile mission and it's essential to the security of our operations.

Hotel models we use for our patrols because patrols go into places where other choppers can't get. Get a very small hole in the bush, the Hotel model can get in in 40 to 60 knots. Command and control, I guess, everybody's familiar with the problem of: if we somehow could afford it, to get enough ^{and} command/control helicopters so that the ground commanders can really operate his battalions and his regiments. And the difficulty with some of the battalion commanders about the condition of their companies, and I found out that I'd seen some of the companies more often than the battalion commander because he couldn't get there, and I had a chopper and I could. (pause)

Artillery. We asked for a look/see at a helicopter transportable 8-inch. The 8-inch is the solution to counter-battery. When we were getting all this fire from up here, 160 cannon shooting at us, I moved the 8-inch up forward.

So in 60 days they killed, as they call it, 41 artillery pieces; this is the ^{tube} / separated from the carrier--both from photography. Another 45 or 20 damaged, turned over, so forth. So we were really making a dent in his artillery because every time he opened up we got part of the battery at the time of the bombing halt. Of course, he hasn't fired since then. So 8-inch, I think, can outgun the 122, can outgun anything else because it can hit 'em. The 122s down in Dewey Canyon . . . I'm sorry I haven't been able to confirm the number of rounds; the Joe Scoppa estimate was just over 1100 rounds of 122 fire at Cunningham and Shiloh, three damaging hits--about 10 or 12 rounds inside the fire base itself. So the 122, shooting at a small target, is not very good. So if we had 8-inch, run them out close to him, we could have knocked him off--counter-battery. So I propose that in our concept, if we could get a couple of helicopter transportable 8-inches, it would pay us in the counter-battery role.

Of course the 155s: we're manning them out of our hides. They're absolutely essential to the concept. The 105 will not dig into the canopy, will not dig into the bunker; the 155 will. So we have to have helicopter transportable 155s in the inventory.

We had some trouble on reaction time which we were working on. We had reports of taking a half hour just to get the first round. Well these are just local problems. I think there's nothing we can do about that. (pause)

Artillery ammunition: We've gone from what I thought about a thousand rounds was as much as you could put on a fire base with any safety, most of them are running up 2-3,000 rounds now. They take this little dozer and scoop out ditches and put it in, leave it in the net 'til they need it. Dewey Canyon . . . we did that at Shiloh. . . build a supply base this way at Shiloh/many cuts with a dozer, fill it all full of ammunition so that when the weather broke down here, we had a short turnaround. But 2 or 3,000 rounds per battery seems to be, particularly in the questionable weather, seems to be about the right level of ammunition supply.

Now we have the new radar in C-2 now which seems to be picking up friendly and enemy artillery and mortar rounds. (What is the number on that, 31?) (Garbled response.)

Thirty-one. It seems to be working fine and be an improvement.

Engineering: First, I think this massive allowance of dozers we have out there needs a re-look now that we have up to about 70-75 operating. I think that's probably enough, but this is something that needs a look at. We rate 130; maybe 75 is enough.

The light dozers--I think we need to put some in the artillery. And we need to be able to put . . . in each regiment we probably need enough to do two dozers per fire base which. . . .

End Side 1, Tape 1

Begin Side 1, Tape 2

Davis: . . . To be able to put . . . in each regiment we probably need enough to do two dozers per fire base, six little dozers per regimental operation. You could run two regimental operations in . . . sort of about a dozen . . . and this would include , and be in the artillery range of the nearest one. About a dozen of those little dozers / . . . the little cases are remarkable piece of machinery, and the little back hoe attachment. If you could see the 3d Marine CP now where the thing just walked in and cut out holes for their CP and everything. In very short order you can get a fire support base ready for incoming mortars and artillery, whatnot. You can really get it ready with these machines in a hurry, and you need enough of them to be able to move the concept right along.

So far we had no serious problem. As you know, we went through some early pains on the nets. Vandegrift-- short turnaround. The weather's bad there. Out of Quang Tri we could get them out on the all-weather. When the weather broke down in Dewey Canyon, Bob Barrow had sunshine at 7 o'clock in the morning sometimes, but it took him 'til almost noon to get the fog out of Quang Tri. This somehow is a foggy bottom type thing. Choppers are held up in here. We even went down to Camp Evans to haul ammunition out. Sometimes you could walk the chopper through, get to Dong Ha because it was open. But it just takes a lot of genius

effort. In almost all weather you can work this thing.

We were delighted with the Wing's capability to drop from helicopters by parachute--KC-^{130s by} parachute--to give us a real all-weather capability with moving the ASRAT forward, some refueling effort forward, with the gun ships.

I think I'm about run out. Anybody has any questions?

Buse: How about the 101,^{Ray;} do you think they are operating the way they ought to be operating?

Davis: I don't think the 101st is aggressively pursuing their maximum capability. Of course, they've been in a refurbishing. . . .

Buse: Reorganization, really.

Davis: Yes. They just now are getting all helicopters on board.

Buse: It seems to me that they had been working on the other side while you were on Dewey Canyon .

Davis: Well / ^{they} couldn't get over. That's one reason we went to Dewey Canyon even though Quang Tri Province goes down there. When the 9th Marines were out west of Khe Sanh, you could just see the sunshine extended all the way down.

This high ground was such that the 101 couldn't get over it; they couldn't get in there at that time. I don't think they were aggressive, and they had been around. The

guy wasn't much of a goer, of course, presently suffering by comparison.

Once they get all their helicopters in, they'll probably be moving out more.

Buse: Anybody else have any questions? Paul, Lou?

Q: I'd like to ask you about your TSS, your Tactical Surveillance Center or whatever it's going to be called up there for your readout of your sensors.

Do you have an officer up there now who's in the process of coming up with a concept--is that right--for your own readout? In addition, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing will provide an airborne capability and, in addition, this will bring all of your means together into what will be called the TSS--isn't it--and then _____. And what's the timing on this?

Davis: Well, it's in business now on a manual basis. We actually have in one wing of the COC this so-called Center where you move the ARVN in and they sit there and keep track of things. The main interest that I had in the machine was that if the whole manual operation of targets and our/artillery management and everything else would benefit from a simple automated data keeping effort. And that's all I've ever talked about. We got some wild ideas about putting in a machine that would react to the sensors. But the sensors are actually reacted to by the guy who reads them. If he

sees something he just tells the artillerymen, "Shoot at that." And he does. You don't need to go all the way back to division to react. In a word, we were after a simplified data storage, data retrieval system. Now with the sensors we're fairly well along; particularly if it's a general. . . . Well, they _____ particularly if he wants to buy us one.

Q: G-1, G-2?

General, your simple explanation here has been of such detail that's it's answered most of my questions and it also has confirmed our assumptions and analysis that General Buse has made here of the actual enemy situation.

I do have one question that I would like to propose here for your opinion. You pretty well spelled out the current situation--the enemy situation. I'm interested as to the status of the individual soldier himself as to his capability. We get all kinds of reports that show that some cases, particularly where you hurt a specific unit, obviously the prisoners of war are going to be subjected and weak and so forth, and the reports will reflect this. And I'm sure the reports are correct. And also correlated and related with that question, are they still continuing to use the same avenues of approach, the same tactical concepts? And what is your opinion of the status of, primarily the junior officer and the staff NCO who is leading the current troops, based on ^{this} / last year of destruction?

Davis: Well, there seem to be a lot of variables in his force. Now we had a guy in an outfit down here around a cache area, and the ARVN rounded up a few of them. And they said: the ones they had and they said all their buddies were 14, 15 years old. Now you keep hearing this kind of thing. I don't know of any other precise evidence of it. His mortar fire has become less precise. We've had 200 rounds of mortar fire all laying outside the perimeter. This used to never happen.

The sappers are absolutely superb! And this is causing us real concern. I think we're on top of it; but this thing against Russell, we captured the plans--as I think you're aware--but he actually moved those sappers in just before dark. A hundred meters outside the wire he had previously plotted the whole thing very carefully; they all had their explosives and they had the folding stock AK-47s; three groups, each group had 3, 4-man teams. And they got up to the wire. Our own artillery was shooting, our mortars were firing. They fired some, some long-range small arms fire, machine guns. But they got inside that position, cut some wire; others they threw foliage and limbs over--got over. They got inside and went right / ^{where} they were supposed to go, ^{a lot of} apparently. Threw charges in our bunkers, shot / our artillerymen at point blank range with AK-47s. And this gave us a fit! And they've been in now, in the five different places out there

without really being detected before they got in. They caught the ARVN three times and caught us twice. Of course, our three listening posts out at Russell, they didn't hear anything until they shot at the guys who were leaving the next morning.

Not enough trip flares. You have to have more interior wiring so once they get in they can't run around so freely. Around each bunker now we have fighting holes; I told them I want more of fighting places and less hiding places. / I don't know whether we're going to survive their next allout effort or not; but these guys are really trained, suicidal-type professional troops, and they're hard and so forth--dedicated all the way.

Wilson: G-3?

Q: No, sir, General.

Wilson: G-4?

Q: No, sir.

Wilson: Engineer, you've had equal time here with. . . .

Q: All right. As long as we can keep the tractors running, we'll make it, General.

That's good.

Davis: /Engineers are doing a great job. We do need. . . .

If we can ever get one of these massive LZ ordnance jobs that

we can lower on a string and set off remote controls. . . . They dropped a lot of them out in the 1st Division. . . . If you missed the target 10 feet, you could be a thousand feet down the side of the mountain; you just can't. . . . This kind of accuracy is not available by air drop. So we need one that we can set down on a string and^{then} go away and shoot it.

Wilson: Q-5?

Q: No, sir.

Wilson: Ordnance? Colonel Martin?

Q: No, sir.

Wilson: Supply. He has no. . . . This is the first time he has had that accolade. (laughter)

Davis: Four hundred tons a day over that road to Vandegrift, I've never been told at Vandegrift that "We don't have it." So, you're doing great!

Maintenance, spare parts have caused us a little headache. But as far as getting up supplies out to Vandegrift. . .

Q: Did you ever use a trap weapon out there? I know they tested it out there a lot to clear ^{the} / landing zones. Did they ever use that?

Davis: Not up in my area.

When 3d Marines was down, they used about twenty of them down south, and I saw some of them myself. As I say, if you missed the little pinnacle about 50 feet, you got you an enormous hole in the wrong place.

Q: I think we're talking two different weapons here, aren't we?

Q: Yes. Well the trap. . . .

Q: Helo trap is what General Fontana was talking about.

Q: You had so many fire support bases and landing zones and landing sites all over the place, did you ever use those to clear out the landing sites?

Davis: Now which one is the trap?

Q: The Zuni rocket with a. . . . (cross talk)
Very small.

Davis: No, I don't remember that I saw that, as I was saying. So I thought that what you meant. . . . (cross talk)

Q: Safety, do you have anything?

Q: So far just one thing, General. They have problems as far as with the fire support bases and location as far as initially on their firing data. That seems to be some of the problems initially.

Davis: Yes. Unfortunately we have more artillery accidents than I'd like--anybody would like to have. We've been running about four a month as I recall. The average rounds fired per accident is . . . I think I'd have to say somewhere between 25,000 or 30,000 rounds.

But so many things seem to be going wrong that I wonder if we shouldn't attempt to somehow automate the artillery. For the last 30 years we've had automated AA. If there is any way we could have it automated to the degree that somewhere in the FDC or the battery, if you had the thing

laid to the wrong place that the machine would tell you: "Hey, if you shoot there you're going to shoot the Marines," this type of thing. We just do. We get guns laid wrong, wrong /data--occasions where if anybody had been able to check what had come out of the calculations against where it was going to land on the map, it would have been known right away it was going to hit Marines.

Q: CEO?

Q: Sir, this type of mobility, do communications limit your mobility any?

Davis: No. I communicated _____, either the channel A--I could talk to Colonel Barrow on the telephone from Cunningham to Dong Ha. Really, communications were superb! We had some problems with it. Get your shots in, in all, but I thought all / superb! But then in the morning after

breakfast somebody would tell [Le] May they couldn't talk to Quang Tri from Dong Ha on the telephone. (laughter)

He said, "Well the Army's running the switchboard at Quang Tri." (laughter)

So he said, "Take care of it right."

[Buse] : Well thanks very much, Ray. That's a very fine debrief. Very helpful to everybody.

Davis: Thank you.

End of debrief

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