ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

General William L. “Spider” Nyland

U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)

Dr. Fred H. Allison

Interviewer

HISTORY DIVISION

Marine Corps University

Quantico, VA

2018

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY
MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
2044 BROADWAY
QUANTICO, VA 22134-5100

FOREWORD

This volume is the transcribed oral history of General William L. Nyland, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. It is the result of an eight-session interview conducted by Dr. Fred H. Allison, head of the oral history section, on behalf of the U.S. Marine Corps History Division. This transcript is the work of many individuals, most importantly General Nyland himself who committed many hours of his time to sit for the interviews and then reviewed and edited the transcripts. Dr. Allison, in addition to conducting the interviews, made initial edits, selected photos and wrote captions, and coordinated the binding of the transcripts.

Oral history interviews are but one facet of the Marine Corps historical collection effort. Oral history provides primary source material to augment the official documentary records. Oral history is essentially spoken history, the oral account of eyewitness observations, impressions, opinions, and perspectives of the interviewee recorded in the course of an interview conducted by a historian employing historical methodology. The final product is a bound transcript, containing historically valuable personal narratives relating to the experiences and observations of distinguished Marines. While General Nyland has reviewed the transcript, readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than the written word. The observations, perspectives and opinions expressed in this volume are those of the interviewee (and interviewer at times) and in no way are those of the official Marine Corps.

Copies of this transcript are archived in the Marine Corps Oral History Collection at the History Division, Marine Corps University, Quantico, Virginia. Other copies are distributed to appropriate offices and libraries in the Marine Corps, various other research libraries of the other armed forces, and appropriate civilian libraries.

Paul J. Weber
Deputy Director of Marine Corps History
USMC History Division

General William L. “Spider” Nyland

Assistant Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps

BIOGRAPHY

William L. "Spider" Nyland, born 2 October 1946, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps under the NROTC program upon graduation in 1968 from the University of New Mexico. In addition to attaining a Masters of Science degree from the University of Southern California, his formal military education includes The Basic School (1968), Naval Aviation Flight Training (NFO) (1969), Amphibious Warfare School (1975), Navy Fighter Weapons School (Top Gun) (1977), College of Naval Command and Staff, Naval War College (1981), and Air War College (1988).

He was advanced to first lieutenant on 5 September 1969, captain on 1 February 1972, major 1 September 1978, and lieutenant colonel on 1 April 1984.

After being assigned to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 351 (VMFA-531), he was ordered to Vietnam, where he flew 122 combat missions with VMFA-314 and VMFA-115. His other tours included: Instructor RIO, Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 101 (VMFAT-101); Squadron Assistant Operations Officer and Operations Officer, VMFA-115; and Brigade FORSTAT and Electronic Warfare Officer, 1st Marine Brigade. He also served as Operations Officer and Director of Safety and Standardization, VMFA-212; Aviation Safety Officer and Congressional Liaison/Budget Officer, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.; and Operations Officer, Marine Aircraft Group-24, 1st Marine Amphibious Brigade. He commanded VMFA-232, the Marine Corps' oldest and most decorated fighter squadron, from July 1985 to July 1987.

Lieutenant Colonel Nyland subsequently served as section chief for the Central Command Section, European Command/Central Command Branch, Joint Operations Division, Directorate of Operations (J-3), Joint Staff, Washington, D.C. He was promoted to colonel on 1 February 1990. In July 1990, Col Nyland assumed command of Marine Aviation Training Support Group (MATSG), Pensacola, Florida. Following his command of MATSG, he assumed duties as Chief of Staff, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing (2d MAW) on 5 July 1992, and assumed additional duties as Assistant Wing Commander on 10 November 1992. He was promoted to brigadier general on 1 September 1994 and was assigned as Assistant Wing Commander, 2d MAW, serving in that billet until 1 December 1995.

Brigadier General Nyland served next on the Joint Staff, J-8, as the Deputy Director for Force Structure and Resources, completing that tour on 30 June 1997. He was advanced to major general on 2 July 1997 and assumed duties as the Deputy Commanding General, II Marine

Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. He then served as the Commanding General, 2d MAW, from July 1998 to June 2000. He was advanced to lieutenant general on 30 June 2000 and assumed duties as the Deputy Commandant for Programs and Resources, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. He next assumed duties as the Deputy Commandant for Aviation on 3 August 2001. He was advanced to general on 4 September 2002 and assumed his duties as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps on 10 September 2002.

General Nyland served as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington D.C., from September 2002 until 7 September 2005. He retired from active duty 1 November 2005.

His personal decorations include: Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Medal with eight Strike/Flight awards, and Joint Service Commendation Medal.

Table of Contents

35, Marine Corps operations, Marines' dedication; Marine ancestors, family history, conferences, Marines of the past

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General William L. "Spider" Nyland, USMC
Date: 5 April 2005
Location: General Nyland's Pentagon Office
Interviewer: Dr. Fred Allison
Historian, Marine Corps History Division

SESSION I:

ALLISON: This is an oral history interview with General William L. "Spider" Nyland, by Dr. Fred Allison on the 5th of April, 2005 in his office in the Pentagon.

Good afternoon Spider.

NYLAND: Well Fred, how are you doing?

ALLISON: Great. I appreciate the time to do this for the Marine Corps Oral History Program.

NYLAND: Absolutely.

ALLISON: And this will be the first session of a career length interview with General **NYLAND**.

NYLAND: Perfect.

ALLISON: I'd like to start off sir by asking you where you were born and raised and something about your family.

NYLAND: Okay. Well I was born in Coronado, California, which most people I guess will know as the little island or peninsula across from San Diego, in October of 1946.

My dad was career Navy so that explains why we were there.

And interesting, I didn't know obviously at the time but I came to find out later I was delivered by a flight surgeon in a little flight line clinic on NAS [Naval Air Station] North Island there because I was premature and my mom had to get there and that's where she got.

So I guess maybe there was some imprinting by that flight surgeon that caused me later on to get in the business I did.

ALLISON: [Laughter] – Right!

NYLAND: My family; I had a brother who was about 18 months younger than me. My dad was career Navy. He was a ship driver and retired as a commander. He had been the CO [commanding officer] of PT [patrol torpedo] boats in World War II in Leyte Gulf and Surigao Straits, then minesweepers during Korea, and then commanded a 2100-ton Fletcher-class destroyer; the USS *Marshall* (DD-676), when I was a young guy in high school. Both of my grandfathers were career Navy; one was a doctor and one was a Civil Engineer Corps, both retired as captains. Two uncles that were naval aviators, one retired as a captain and one retired as a commander.

ALLISON: Your two uncles, they were aviators in World War II?

NYLAND: One was and one was probably post [World War II], if I recall his age correctly, but actually my one uncle who retired as a Navy captain was the LSO [landing signal officer] when Doolittle flew off the *Hornet*.

ALLISON: Is that right, one of your uncles was?

NYLAND: Yes. So coming from a Navy family my life was spent basically moving up and down the West Coast; San Diego, Long Beach, Monterey, San Francisco, and over to the East Coast from Key West to Norfolk to Washington, DC when my dad was in the Pentagon. Then when I was real small he was sent by the Navy to the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. He had to work on his college degree because when he came in during the war he was one of the "90-Day Wonders". He was attending the University of the Philippines and came back to the states, went to OCS [officers candidate school], got trained in PT boats and went to war in the Philippines. He came back to the states because he was in college. He stayed right there in Newport, Rhode Island where they had the PT boat school. They checked him out in PT boats and sent him to the Pacific.

ALLISON: I see.

NYLAND: But he had not completed college so the Navy sent him there (Albuquerque) when I was about five years old I guess and we were there for about a year, so my life was pretty much marked by moving every couple of years, you know, and coast to coast sometimes and sometimes up and down the same coast.

ALLISON: Mostly out on the West Coast though it sounds like.

NYLAND: Well three years in Key West, two years in Norfolk, three years in Virginia and then the rest primarily on the West Coast. I counted it up one time and I think I went to ten or eleven schools in 13 years.

ALLISON: Is that right?

NYLAND: So that was kind of the life I grew up in. When I was in high school my dad was the CO of the USS *Marshall.* When he gave up command I was in the middle of my sophomore year and we moved to Washington, DC, which was somewhat of a shock to me having been spending all my time in jeans and aloha shirts to come to DC and have to find out that the "young gentlemen," as the dean of boys told me at Yorktown High School, wore a tie and a sweater to school.

My dad came back here and worked in "BuShips" and was one of the guys that was in on the design and development of the hydrofoils for the Navy.

But I finished high school here in Virginia and my intent was to go to college not too near home figuring I was about to get out on my own and I ought to just get on with it. I was looking forward to that, and so I ended up going to the University of New Mexico, there on a NROTC [Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps] scholarship.

It was different in those days. You started out with the Navy ROTC scholarship and then there were Marine options that you applied for and a certain percentage of the class could be accepted, and I got accepted to take a Marine option. Nowadays, of course, there's actually a Marine ROTC scholarship program that you start right out knowing that you're going to be in the Marine Corps. So I started out in the NROTC and at the end of my freshman year I was awarded the Professor of Naval Science Scholarship because I was not on a full scholarship at that point. So, I was awarded the full scholarship and then completed college on a full NROTC scholarship, which led to a regular commission. When I came back as a sophomore was when I made the decision I wanted to go in the Marine Corps.

ALLISON: What prompted that?

NYLAND: We had an absolutely tremendous Marine officer instructor and his assistant. The Marine officer instructor was then Major Robert Haebel who later retired as Major General Robert E. Haebel and Master Sergeant Montoya, and for reasons unknown to me

they took an interest in me as a freshman; me and Barry Knutson who went on to become a lieutenant general in the Marine Corps . . .

ALLISON: He was out there too?

NYLAND: Yes, as well as Kenny Levan and Milo Warner who both retired as colonels in the Marine Corps.

ALLISON: Milo was an aviator, right?

NYLAND: Yes. So I went to sea in my freshman year and while it was interesting I pretty much determined that, "I'm going to be a whole lot better off with a pistol in my hand or a rifle leading Marines to go the shortest distance between two points or certainly with some tactics to get somewhere as opposed to riding around in the ocean," which while there was a lot to be done I felt we could have done it more quickly.

ALLISON: [Chuckle].

NYLAND: And so the influence of Major Haebel plus my experiences on that cruise made me decide I'd go in the Marine Corps, and I went and applied, was accepted, and the rest is kind of history I guess.

I graduated from college in June of '68, was commissioned on the 19th of June and headed off to Basic School.

ALLISON: And you've been in the Marine Corps ever since, since 1968.

NYLAND: Yes. So when I retire here in September it will be a little over 37 years and it's been absolutely terrific. I wouldn't change a page.

ALLISON: As you looked at going in the Marine Corps obviously you went into aviation. Can you trace your interest in aviation back to an earlier time or did it just seem like the right thing to do at that time?

NYLAND: Actually when I first came in the Marine Corps I think I was pretty much like anybody; I had no real feel or knowledge for how long it would be. You know I kind of thought I'd come in and do my time and then I might get out and become a doctor or a professor of zoology and I really had not focused that much on aviation. I had done the second class cruise in particular while I was in college, which was aviation oriented, and I had flown down at Corpus Christi where we were for half of that cruise and I found that it was neat, I enjoyed it, but I didn't go to Basic School knowing that I necessarily was going to go to aviation.

ALLISON: No aviation contracts.

NYLAND: No, there were no contracts in those days. You went to Basic School and then you got selected for whatever you wanted to do based on your desires and your academic standing or your class standing, which was academics and leadership and everything.

I started looking around at the MOS's [military occupational specialties], I mean what did people do. I think when you first come in you don't really have a good feel for that and we had all the different MOS occupation fields come down and brief us on what's available and I looked around and I thought, you know the aviation thing kind of appealed to me. So I took the AQT-FAR and scored high enough and when it came time to select, I selected aviation, which in those days actually didn't count as a choice. It was sort of an above the line choice and then you picked three ground MOS's as follow-on. And low and behold my class standing and everything was good enough and I was selected for aviation and about that same time I found out that I didn't have 20/20 vision. That was okay because there were opportunities in the naval flight officer program, either in the F-4 or the A-6, as long as your eyes weren't worse than, I think it was 20/40 in those days, so I said, "It sounds good to me," and I completed Basic School and headed off to Pensacola, Florida.

ALLISON: Looking back to TBS what was that like in those days; in '68?

NYLAND: It was pretty busy.

ALLISON: What class were you in Sir?

NYLAND: I was in Company A, Class 1-69. In those days the fiscal year still began on 1 July and so we were in the throws of . . . .

ALLISON: This is right in the middle of the summer there when you started.

NYLAND: Right in the middle of summer. We checked in on the 5th of July, 1969. I mean 1968. The Class of '69 because it was the new fiscal year and we graduated on the, I think it was the 4th of December, 1968. I think it was 21 weeks long as I recall. It was really busy obviously because we were pushing hard to get people out the door and get them to Vietnam. Camp Barrett was so full, that when I checked into Basic School all of us in Alpha Company lived in Quonset huts at Camp Upshur for six weeks until there was room to move into O'Bannon Hall at Camp Barrett.

As I recall I think we worked every Saturday but two because there was just a rush to get as much education as possible and get us out the door, and we had a fair amount of our

class, and I can't remember the exact percentage but a fair amount of our class after having graduated in early December spent Christmas in Vietnam. So it was busy. It was fast paced. Like I said, a lot of weekends, a lot of field problems and things that kept you busy pretty much from sunup to sundown and then some. As I look back on it, it was great. In fact here last year we finally, after all these years; 36 years, had a reunion of our Basic School class, which was just wonderful. We ended up being able to contact just about everybody in the class or understand that they were no longer with us, and for the first reunion we had about 82 or 83 members of the class that showed up and it was remarkable.

ALLISON: About how many graduated?

NYLAND: I think we had about 240 in our class; 240-244, somewhere in that neighborhood.

ALLISON: You probably, no doubt, lost some of them in Vietnam too.

NYLAND: We lost some of them in Vietnam and lost some of them over the years. It turned out we had, interesting that in our class we had five general officers come out of it.

ALLISON: Besides yourself who would they be?

NYLAND: Well we had Lieutenant General Jack Klimp, Lieutenant General [Wallace C.] "Chip" Gregson, and he and I are the only two still on active duty out of our class. We also had Major General Wayne Rollings and Major General Charlie Bolden, all of us out of that one class.

ALLISON: Wow, impressive.

NYLAND: So it was pretty neat.

ALLISON: Now Charlie Bolden went into the astronaut program, didn't he?

NYLAND: Yes, he sure did. He was an astronaut for many years and then came back to the Marine Corps up at the Naval Academy as the Commandant of Midshipmen, was selected for general officer, came back to the Marine Corps again and now is retired and living in Houston.

ALLISON: Right, and does he work for NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] now?

NYLAND: He's not working for NASA now. I wouldn't be surprised if he realigned with them at some point but to my knowledge right now, other than perhaps in a consulting role or

something, he is not particularly on NASA's roles. So all of us out of one class is pretty neat. And now to have myself and General Gregson still on active duty is pretty neat.

ALLISON: Where is he at now?

NYLAND: He's the commanding general of Marine Forces Pacific and so he's in Hawaii.

ALLISON: I see, okay.

I guess TBS was heavily influenced by Vietnam in those days. What was going on in Vietnam? What were you hearing?

NYLAND: Well we were pretty engaged. The Marine Corps had grown in size to conservatively over 300,000 during Vietnam and then we all pretty well knew that there was a strong possibility that that's where we were going. I remember one night when we had --we used to have an event that was called "Mad Moments" – I think that was the right name for it – and basically what they did was they fired the final protective fires and all the fires that would be used in the defense and they brought the spouses out to take a look at it. Well unfortunately for our class most of the orders had come out a couple of days before that night and so then a lot of the spouses saw the final protective fires and they were a little upset for their husbands that they figured were headed to Vietnam.

ALLISON: They were not too impressed.

NYLAND: The timing didn't work out probably to the best advantage at that point but much of what we did there was clearly focused on being able to be a good solid platoon commander and to some extent company commander if that opportunity arose - an awful lot of focus on I would say patrolling and map reading, and plus all the standard things that come with Basic School from soup to nuts. But it just seemed pretty intense because we were there on weekends.

ALLISON: It didn't give you much time for recreational activities, did it?

NYLAND: No it didn't. In fact I can remember thinking to myself, you know being down there on a Saturday and wondering why it was I was in such a hurry to get out of college and now I'm not going to the stadium to watch those football games and here I am cleaning my M-14, but no regrets. I had a great, great class and learned a lot. I had a lot of opportunity there to do the different leadership roles and it was pretty clear to me that I'd made the right choice. I really enjoy being a Marine and enjoy all that the Marines stand for in the eyes of

the American public and trying to be one of the guys that help uphold that standard, so a busy time. In fact I still have it at home; I have a couple of schedules from there.

ALLISON: Do you?

NYLAND: I have my paperwork from "Selection Night". I've got my "O" Club card from old Waller Hall, which you probably never even heard of it.

ALLISON: Not familiar with it.

NYLAND: Well Waller Hall was the O Club but it's been gone for years and then it moved to Harry Lee Hall, which . . . .

ALLISON: That's what I remember.

NYLAND: So I'm a little bit of a pack rat you know. I have some of that stuff left. I even have my little red notebook from OCS.

ALLISON: Is that right? That's great stuff.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: I mean that would be great historical information.

NYLAND: Well I've got a lot of that kind of thing and I've had the Flying Leatherneck Museum out on the West Coast ask me for anything that I think I want to get rid of.

ALLISON: Oh really?

NYLAND: And I know you and I have talked about some of my notes and things at some point for the History Division.

ALLISON: Great resource there.

NYLAND: But I've got a bunch of that stuff and it's, I mean it's just been a great, great way of life.

ALLISON: So you finished up in TBS in '69?

NYLAND: '68; December of '68, and reported to flight school in Pensacola on New Year's Eve 1968.

ALLISON: Did you have in your mind what you wanted to fly down there?

NYLAND: I pretty much thought that I wanted to fly F-4s. I mean it was really between F-4s and A-6s and I thought I wanted to get into the F-4.

ALLISON: That's about the only choice you would have back in those days.

NYLAND: Yes, just those two. So that kind of got solidified while I was there because the Blue Angels were flying F-4s. The F-4s came into the flight line and we had an opportunity

to go down there and crawl around and look them over, and again, it was one of those deals where you know your class ranking was what got you what you were going to fly and what coast, and having spent a lot of my youth on the West Coast I really wanted to fly F-4s and wanted to fly out of El Toro and I fortunately had the class standing that got me both of those. And so I was in Pensacola from January through June. In those days they used to send you over to Kingsville and Beeville and they'd put you in the back seat of the F-9 and run you around the bombs and rocket pattern and bend you around the sky and see if this is really what you wanted to do. You'd do that for two weeks and then you'd go back to Pensacola and they gave you a TAD [temporary additional duty] check and you went to Glynco, Georgia, and that's where the RIO [radar intercept officer] school was, also the BN [bombardier/navigator] school. But I went up there and we flew T-39s that had F-8 radars in them and so we spent a lot of time in the simulator and about 80 hours in the airplane. I got my wings on the 12th of September, 1969, was promoted to first lieutenant on the 5th of September I think, 1969, packed my trash one more time and drove to El Toro.

ALLISON: What did you find the most difficult part of flight school? Did you have trouble with air sickness or anything like that?

NYLAND: Yes, I had a little problem with that initially in the T-39 because you're back in the back of that tube and they would close the windowpanes so it was dark in there so you could see the radar and so the first couple of hops were pretty rough for me.

ALLISON: You kind of wondered if you'd made the right decision.

NYLAND: I wondered if I made the, you know, "I'm not sure this is [chuckle], this is all that great." But then by going up and flying in the right front seat and using the radar up there then it was like a different world once you could see outside and so I completed there without any more difficulties. And the hardest part, I guess, was it was pretty intense and in those days we had close to a 60 percent failure rate. Guys would just, you know if they hadn't been to Basic School they'd go to Basic School and if they had been they'd just get another MOS and go away, so it was a pretty hard cut. I do remember that and the fact that people telling us that this particular school had one of the highest attrition rates, the RIO school, than any of the schools that they had. I went flying with a lot of guys that had F-8 time because they understood the radar and they were trying to teach us reciprocals and target aspects and degrees to go, so it was a busy time.

ALLISON: You mentioned some of those people hadn't been to Basic School?

NYLAND: Yes, in the days when I came in reserve officers didn't have to go to Basic School. They could go straight to flight school and then they would take it ostensibly by correspondence course. Obviously I think it was back when General [Alfred M.] Gray was Commandant that we changed that and all lieutenants go to Basic School. Of course now you can go with a contract and know that when you're done, if you're successful, you'll go to aviation or whatever but in those days Reserve officers could go straight to flight school.

ALLISON: So you'd had a regular commission coming out of ROTC?

NYLAND: Because I was on a full NROTC scholarship, I was to be a regular commission and so regular guys went to Basic School. I had the Navy ROTC scholarship and I took the Marine option during my sophomore year. I got the scholarship because of my class standing and what I had done as a freshman.

ALLISON: I see, and so that came with a regular commission?

NYLAND: Yes, so at the end of that the CO of the unit said, "Okay, I'm giving you the captain's appointment to the regular program." I got it and then I was on scholarship from then on and when I was commissioned I was commissioned as a regular officer and went to Basic School.

ALLISON: Did you have in your mind at that time sort of what Marine aviation was really all about?

NYLAND: I had a limited understanding because as a junior and a senior, instead of taking classes that were oriented towards navigation and things that the Navy class took, we took Marine history.

ALLISON: Ah, okay, the Marine option I guess.

NYLAND: So one of those years we studied amphibious warfare and one of those years it was basic warfare, so I had a little bit of an understanding because we had studied the war in the Pacific in particular and understanding the Cactus air force and the role of Marine aviation it played, but more from having studied academic historic profession, then I really understood how it all fit together. I think that started to come obviously at Basic School and then, I mean I'm still learning today.

ALLISON: It's always sort of surprising how many Marine aviators came in with no knowledge of really, what Marine aviation exists for. A lot of them were influenced - well

the younger ones - by watching *Baa Baa Black Sheep* on TV and that whole Boyington/Foss thing from Guadalcanal seems to have influenced a lot of people coming to Marine aviation, and they ended up flying attack missions their whole life or something like that.

NYLAND: Well of course when I came in none of those series were popular [chuckle]. There wasn't anything to really influence us other than just kind of assess what is it that you think you want to do and it looked like something that I wanted to do and was fortunate enough to be selected all the way along the line to do the things I wanted to do.

ALLISON: Did you have any sort of role models that you were looking at that tended to sort of influence your decisions, do you think?

NYLAND: I don't recall that I did. At this point you're learning so much and you don't look up that much because you've got your blinders on just trying to make sure you don't goon up what you're doing yourself; what you've been assigned as your own task. And so while clearly there were people that you felt comfortable going to and asking things about, you know, "Am I doing this right" or "How could I do that better", I don't guess I would say I had a role model that I was fashioning myself after but I did have people that I felt comfortable going to and asking, "Am I doing a good job at this? Am I missing something," or "Can we work on this a little longer to make sure I've got it right?" But I think as a lieutenant you're so focused on your lane and making sure that you're successful at what you've been assigned that I don't think I really looked up there and thought I had a role model that I was after other than just being a good Marine.

ALLISON: Okay. You got orders to El Toro. Did they have the RAG [replacement air group] set up out there?

NYLAND: In those days VMFAT-101 was a relatively new squadron. That was the F-4 RAG on the West Coast. VMFAT-201 was on the East Coast at Cherry Point.

And I got to 101. I guess by the time I had leave/travel/proceed and all that stuff I got there in mid to late September, and I wasn't assigned to VMFA-531 until the last week in December at which time 101 was still having a tough time. We didn't have a lot of airplanes up. In fact in one stretch we went six days without an up-airplane and on the seventh day we got one up and flew it and crashed it. It was at that point often where - because there weren't many airplanes up on a daily basis - if you were the ODO; the operations duty officer, you'd

call the SDO; squadron duty officer, who had to stay overnight in the squadron anyway and see if there was a need for you to come in and put the schedule on the board.

ALLISON: Oh really?

NYLAND: So it was pretty grim.

ALLISON: So you had to pool the airplanes?

NYLAND: Well we had to pool them up. Part of that was -I'm sure - in those days I wasn't clever enough to know - but I'm sure due to parts and availability. But the other thing was in VMFA-531 we were also a pool for jets to go to Vietnam. So if we had a good jet and it was up for several days in a row a lot of them left to go take care of the squadrons that were in Chu Lai and Da Nang.

ALLISON: I see.

NYLAND: So you had a couple of competing priorities.

So after almost three months in 101, as a matter of fact I think I got three hops in three months with 101, but one month I went over to 531 and went on a cross-country and got nine or ten hours. I was reassigned to VMFA-531, MAG-33 on the other side of the field and went over there and flew with them I think until about the June timeframe and packed up my trash and headed to Vietnam.

ALLISON: Did they have pretty much a syllabus that you were able to work through on that cross-country?

NYLAND: We did have a syllabus. It was nowhere near what we've evolved to today but we had a syllabus, you know some air-to-ground work and some air-to-air work. Toward the latter part of the time I was there we actually started to get into early tactics with VIDs [visual identifications—a type of radar intercept]. We sent some of the first Marines to Top Gun while I was in 531.

ALLISON: Top Gun was going back then—I guess had just started up?

NYLAND: It stood up during that timeframe and we sent a jet down there with Larry Richards and Vern Maddox.

So at the latter part of my time there we actually started doing a little bit more with air-to-air and some basic aircraft maneuvering but a lot of the syllabus was air-to-ground work and a lot of it was just straight intercept type work with "knowns" and "unknowns," [refers to type of intercept problem set up for training where the heading of the bogey aircraft

to be intercepted is either known or unknown] not unlike what we had done at Glynco but now with the APQ-72; the F-4B radar as opposed to the F-8 radar.

ALLISON: Which seemed to be a vast improvement I would think.

NYLAND: Well it did. I mean you had a lot more, you know you had 60 [degrees] left/60 right, as opposed to what we had in the F-8, which as I recall was somewhere about 25/30 degrees left and right and it was a pretty powerful radar. In fact I always loved that APQ-72. It was a great radar.

ALLISON: The "B"; is that the same radar they put in the "N"?

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: Pulse only?

NYLAND: Yes, pulse only.

ALLISON: That was a good radar.

NYLAND: A great system.

ALLISON: That was always my favorite radar. If you could get the "N" radar you knew you were going to have [a radar that worked].

NYLAND: I loved it. That was a good system and you could do a lot of tricks with it. You could go to single-beam width on that thing, you'd put in clutter overrides so it wouldn't power level mode shift and there were a lot of tricks that you could do and it had the power to get good detection. And so that was a good time.

I flew a little more there. I think by the time I went to Vietnam I think I had about 80 hours or 85 hours in the F-4 when I went to Vietnam, which by today's standards is not very many but by comparison with the first three months and what I'd done while I was in 101 compared to then six months in 531 it was pretty significant.

ALLISON: What was your impression of the F-4 the first time you got in that thing and took off?

NYLAND: I've got a funny story. The first time I saw it; I checked in at El Toro - and I had seen it before - and I walked up to this one in the hanger and I thought, "Man, that thing is even bigger than I ever thought. I don't even know how you go about getting in that thing," and it wasn't until I stepped back from it and was talking to somebody I realized the thing was up in the air on jacks.

ALLISON: [Chuckle].

NYLAND: They had been jacking and cycling the gear and I'm looking up at this thing and I'm going, "Holy Moly" [chuckle]. But I remember my first hop. You know you were just scrambling to get everything done I mean despite the fact that we had practiced. I remember our seat lecture was given to us by an old winged warrant officer; Robbie Robinson, and he had talked to us about the seat and the nav computer and of course we'd been through, you know in those days NAMTraDets [Naval Air Maintenance Training detachment] ran a school and you went through a week long school that talked about all aircraft systems and everything. But hopping in that big boy and strapping in for the first time I remember vividly at El Toro on runway two-five - which is nowadays you would never be able to take off because it went right over the top of John Wayne Airport - and taxied out and still scrambling as we get to the hold-short to get the dog-gone leg garters on right.

And in those days it was still only a single leg garter and in the H-5 seat you had to have 120 knots to use it and all that, but boy, it just seemed like I just did not have enough time to get on my comm, my G-suit, my shoulder harness, my lap belts and my leg garters, everything all together, and then you just get on the runway and the next thing you know you feel like, "I'm still back there and this jet is way out here." [Chuckle]

ALLISON: Right, at 200 knots.

NYLAND: You know you feel the burners kick in and that thing starts hurtling down the runway and the next thing you know you're trying to keep up with the comm and your mind is still back on the ramp at El Toro. It was amazing.

ALLISON: Do you remember who the pilot was on that first flight?

NYLAND: I've got my logbook. It was one of two guys. I either flew in my first hop with [either] [LtCol] Ron Kron who was the CO of the squadron or Hank Miller who was the XO. [After checking his log books he discovered it was actually Miller].

ALLISON: Right.

Do you remember any other officers that stand out in your mind from that squadron?

NYLAND: Well Robbie Robinson stands out because he was a winged warrant and he was a RIO and he talked to us about the seat and the nav computer and how to use that. Another guy that stands out for me was Mike Murphy because Mike was fresh back from Vietnam, was an instructor there, and when I came back from Vietnam and became an instructor in 101, which had been moved to Yuma, Mike was still there and then he went on to join the

Blue Angels and tragically was killed in an airplane accident with the Blue Angels. The other guy who was there that I had known my whole entire life and still am very close friends with is Gary Van Gysel "Gazelle" who is a legend in his own time as well. The other guy that I recall even though I haven't seen him for many, many years is Hank Ivy who was a major at the time. He was the Ops O [operations officer]. And then our maintenance officer was Major [Richard J.] "Rattler" McGann. And I think those are the guys that stick out from when I was in 101 the first time.

I moved over to 531. Lieutenant Colonel John Thatcher was the CO, a great, great guy. The Ops O was Major [Jack O.] Waldo. Of course I mentioned Larry Richard who was in the squadron. Vern Maddox was one of the Instructor RIOs there. Dick Kindsfater, "K-9".

ALLISON: K-9 was a noted RIO.

NYLAND: 600 missions in Vietnam. He was in the squadron. There was instructor Tom Stone; Jack Bardon who was a W-4 [WO-4], another RIO; "Jeep" Deerirco who was in the squadron there; Stan Huey, brother of Sam Huey who retired as a one-star. And I'm sure I could come up with a few other names if I looked in my book but a lot of great names in F-4 and Marine aviation history.

ALLISON: Vern Maddox was a legendary RIO. I remember as a young guy hearing about him.

NYLAND: A great American. He now is retired and teaches history in Oklahoma.

ALLISON: Oh really?

NYLAND: Yes, he's an expert in Southwest history and particularly in the cattle trails. In a junior college, or maybe a very small four-year college, I'm not sure.

Well Larry Richards, he did an exchange tour with the Air Force. He was a MIG killer flying an Air Force F-4. Mick Richardson was a great guy and went on to become a dentist and then was dual-designated in the Navy.

ALLISON: What do you mean by that; flying another aircraft?

NYLAND: Well he flew F-4s in the Reserves but he also was an active duty Navy dentist. Kind of like the flight surgeons that we have that are also pilots, so he did both.

ALLISON: I see.

NYLAND: And Jeff Hardy, "Stinger", another bunch of great guys.

ALLISON: What was California like in those days? El Toro has really grown up but wasn't it out in the country?

NYLAND: Yes, it was kind of in the orange groves and it was, like I said, in those days we could take off on runway two five and take off and go straight to the water, no restrictions.

ALLISON: So it was good training there.

NYLAND: It was great training. And in those days you didn't even have to have a flight plan, you could fly VFR [visual flight rules] tower-to-tower. So we could take off out of El Toro and go tower-to-tower to Miramar, tower-to-tower to Yuma and do training and you had access to all the ranges in between, so it was a lot of fun.

ALLISON: I bet.

NYLAND: And just a great opportunity. I mean there would be times when we'd have a jet and there would be a young pilot and a young RIO like myself and they'd just put us in the jet and we'd go out to the Whiskey 291 and we'd run intercepts on whatever we could find on the radar.

ALLISON: Is that right; you mean airliners?

NYLAND: Airliners, whoever was out there; F-8s, other F-4s, whatever showed up, and it was pretty interesting and I learned a lot that way [laughter]. I remember you'd go out the back gate at El Toro and the gas wars were on and regular gas was 27 cents a gallon. I mean I'm driving a '69 Oldsmobile Cutlass Sports Coupe.

A big V-8, three-speed, dual exhausts, you know gas was not an object, not a matter.

ALLISON: A nice car; '69 Cutlass.

NYLAND: Yes, and it was a great time. You know it was a lot of fun as a lieutenant.

And they had great club there, pretty terrific happy hours.

ALLISON: Was there a lot of squadron camaraderie?

NYLAND: Oh yes. Yes, squadrons were very close and did all kind of events together whether it was just happy hour or just events that were put on at squadron parties, you know hayrides and stuff. There were very strong ties to your squadron and it was great, a lot of memories.

ALLISON: So how did you get into VMFA-314?

NYLAND: 314 was still in Chu Lai and 323 came back and went into cadre status while I was in 531 and then when I went to Vietnam I guess 323 stood back up during that

timeframe. But when I went to Vietnam, when I got to Chu Lai I was in 314. The other squadrons down there then were 122 and 115.

ALLISON: So it was just 323 that had gone into cadre there?

NYLAND: Yes, they were coming back out of country. I think sometime in the first half of 1969 they came back and they cadreed initially. I think the guy who brought them back was [Donald L.] "Bear" Waldvogel and the "Snakes" [slang for VMFA-323's actual squadron nickname, the Death Rattlers] went into cadre status there for a while. I can't remember exactly when they got reactivated but I do remember them flying the airplanes in and they brought back a few of the airplanes and the colors and the Bible, and put them in cadre status. So 531 and 101 were the only guys that were actively flying F-4s right then at El Toro.

ALLISON: Did they have A-4s there too?

NYLAND: Yes, we had A-4s there. I don't remember what the squadron was other than the "Hams" [slang for H&MS—headquarters and maintenance squadron] had the TA-4s because we did actually start to fly against the TA-4s when we were doing some of our VID work and some of our basic aircraft maneuvering work.

ALLISON: What mission do you think you enjoyed the most as you were getting into the Phantom?

NYLAND: Okay, I guess what I came to enjoy the most was going straight up and straight down.

ALLISON: Air-to air stuff?

NYLAND: Pushing the airplane around the sky.

ALLISON: Do you remember who the people considered the best stick in the squadron at that time?

NYLAND: Well in 531, at that time, I think the guy that was given that title was probably Larry Richards. And his call sign was "Stick" so he had a great set of hands and he could shove that airplane and put it where it needed to be. We had a couple of young lieutenants that flew a pretty good airplane; Chuck Brooks in Chu Lai, but Larry Richard was the first guy that I know of anyway that ever went to Top Gun.

ALLISON: Top Gun must have been just . . .

NYLAND: Brand new, brand new. We wound up putting together a school that got people ready to go over there and turn that around—the kill ratio.

ALLISON: Right. Was it a real big thing; sort of a big, not privilege but sort of an acknowledgement of your skill?

NYLAND: Yes, and I think the fact that you got a choice to go to Top Gun was sort of acknowledgement that you knew what you were doing in the airplane and that you would be able to take those skills and teach because that's really what it was, was graduate level skills and then you could take that back to your squadron and instruct.

ALLISON: Of course they didn't have a WTI [weapons tactics instructor] program then, did they?

NYLAND: No WTI but we had the beginnings of the ACTI [air combat tactics instructor] program. That came out of MAWTUPac [Marine Aviation Weapons and Training Unit Pacific].

ALLISON: They had one on each coast, didn't they?

NYLAND: Yes.

END OF SESSION I

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General William L. "Spider" Nyland, USMC
Date: 31 May 2005
Location: General Nyland's Pentagon Office
Interviewer: Dr. Fred Allison
Historian, Marine Corps History Division

SESSION II:

ALLISON: This is the second session of an interview with General **NYLAND** by Fred
ALLISON. Today's date is the 31st of May, 2005, and we're at his office in the Pentagon. Good afternoon Sir.
NYLAND: Hey, good afternoon "Mule".
ALLISON: Just picking up where we left off the other day. We were talking about you had just finished up your training in the RAG [replacement air group] there in [VMFAT] 101, or actually finished up in [VMFA] 531 and you were talking about, recalling other Marines who were with you there in 531.
NYLAND: Yes.
ALLISON: Okay.
Well then I understand after that then this would be about the middle of 1970 I believe…
NYLAND: Yes it was.
ALLISON: . . . and you got orders to Vietnam.
NYLAND: Yes.
ALLISON: What were your expectations after you got those orders; I mean what did you expect Vietnam to be like and what you would be doing?
NYLAND: I didn't really, I guess, know for sure. I mean I talked with the guys in 531 who had been recent returnees and of course you know as junior officers our focus was somewhat narrowed probably or seemed broad for us but it was pretty much on learning the airplane

and how to do that properly. So I knew that I was going to go drop a lot of bombs no doubt and do some close air support and maybe do some air-to-air work but I guess I really didn't know exactly what to expect. I mean I'd never been anywhere near Vietnam before that.

ALLISON: Sure.

NYLAND: And I knew we had to go through Okinawa on the way and the guys had given me all the gouge on Okinawa; guys that had been buddies of mine that had gone the month before.

ALLISON: What do you mean about Okinawa; I mean what was special about that place?

NYLAND: Well we had to go through there to process into country. In fact everybody went there and then they determined whether you were going to go into Vietnam or some guys actually went up to [Marine Corps Air Station or MCAS] Iwakuni [Japan] while we had two squadrons up there.

ALLISON: Okay.

NYLAND: And when I went to Vietnam all the airplanes in Vietnam were F-4Bs. We had some early "J" models up in Iwakuni and so almost all the RIOs [radar intercept officers] went in-country. I mean there was a shortage then as there seems to be cyclically through our history.

ALLISON: Yes.

NYLAND: But some of the pilots actually went north and went up to Iwakuni but in Okinawa is where they sorted that out, it was 1st MAW [Marine Aircraft Wing] forward there.

And so you had to get your shots, you know your gamma globulin shots. You know it's like getting a golf ball in each cheek of your hieny [rear end].

And they gave you a couple sets of jungle utilities and some boots and then you waited around for I think it was World Airways who had the contract to fly you from Kadena into country.

So I got ready to go and a good friend of mine, Jack Daniels, he was still at El Toro and …

ALLISON: Jack Daniels, what a name [chuckle].

NYLAND: Yes, John was his real name but obviously we all called him Jack. He picked me up and drove me out to March Air Force Base and I got on the big bird and headed to Okinawa. I remember we got to Okinawa, it was some ungodly hour; it was like one

o'clock/two o'clock in the morning, and I'd been warned that they would send us to a place called Camp Hague, which doesn't even exist anymore, and the stories were that it had been condemned by the Army but the Marine Corps took it. You know how those stories are [chuckle].

ALLISON: Sure, right, sometimes they're true too.

NYLAND: Yes, they could well be.

ALLISON: [Chuckle].

NYLAND: Well we go over there and sure enough it's got plywood walls up to about mid-chest and then screen from there on and light bulbs and the bugs are flying all over the place. And they gave us all a towel – and they had a little club there – they gave us a towel so I went in and took a shower, came back and handed them their towel and went to the club and we waited until it was early enough to get a cab and then we took a cab because we had the gouge and we went to Kadena Air Force Base and checked in over there and got put in a room with-- we had three racks in there but the rooms were air-conditioned and they had overseas TV. So we checked in over there and then we'd go back and forth to Camp Hague until we had all the required paperwork completed and got manifested on the Freedom Bird and then flew the Freedom Bird into Da Nang.

I remember getting into Da Nang. I got in there, it was about 17 or 1800, and so the last of the [KC-] 130s that made the shuttle runs, which was VMGR-152 and they were called "Teeny-weenie Airlines", the last of the shuttle runs for Chu Lai had left for that day so we had to trudge up the path up towards Freedom Hill and they had a transient barracks there and we'd go in there, and of course the only rack left is the top one. Again, it's right underneath the light bulb and the whole thing is covered in bugs. So I threw my junk up there.

And then there was, I think it was 9th Engineers or somebody; one of the engineer outfits was having a barbeque so two or three of us, we went over, we were all going to Chu Lai the next day, so we went up there and had the barbeque and went back and collapsed in the rack and about one o'clock/two o'clock in the morning we started hearing incoming.

ALLISON: Oh, is that right? Now this is Da Nang, right?

NYLAND: Da Nang, yes. And I said, "Wholly mackerel [laughter], not already", and it didn't seem to last long. Pretty soon our guys were shooting artillery back.

The morning came and we went down to, I think it was 15th Aero Port [squadron] and got on the 130 and flew down to Chu Lai, got off at Chu Lai, and I'll never forget the day we got off the airplane; here comes an F-4 back into pattern and when he gets near the airfield both guys jump out of it. I guess they had control problems or something. But anyway I thought, "Boy **NYLAND**, what did you get yourself into this time?" [Laughter]

So I moved into Chu Li and got assigned to VMFA-314.

ALLISON: The Black Knights.

NYLAND: The Black Knights.

ALLISON: Right. Was that a Black Night airplane that was crashing there?

NYLAND: No, I don't recall but I don't think it was.

ALLISON: Okay.

NYLAND: Although that reminds me, we did have one RIO in the squadron when I got there and he jumped out of two of them in ten days and so his call sign became "Test."

ALLISON: "Test?"

NYLAND: Rob Blakely was his real name but he became "Test" for testing the seats [laughter].

ALLISON: Testing the seats [chuckle].

So you checked into [VMFA] 314?

NYLAND: I checked into 314 and wandered over and they got me in a hooch. We had Quonset huts that were cut into quarters and there was an air-conditioning unit cut into the high end of the curved wall in each end; two guys per quarter, and initially I wasn't sure where I was going to be and I went and slept. They gave me a rack of a guy who was gone somewhere. I think he took an airplane up to Atsugi to be worked on or something; Punchy Schuler. And so I stayed a couple nights in his rack until he came back and by then they'd determined where I would go and I moved into my own hooch and just started settling in. I think I probably flew within two days of being there; first missions and we didn't have much of a grander scale I guess other than when we knew Marines were in contact. We did a fair amount of just dropping bombs at a place; "Go find the FAC [forward air controller]. Here's your target, mark it." But we also did a fair amount of troops in contact and I guess that's probably the one that stuck with us the most. You just knew that there were other Marines down there and you had to get in there and get the job done and that was always a

thrill to make it happen, particularly if you got in under bad weather, you know the guys think, "We might not get there", but we usually managed to make it happen.

We used to fly a fair amount of MiGCAPs [MiG combat air patrol] escorting the B-52s when they would go up along the trail and up north.

ALLISON: Escorting B-52s?

NYLAND: Right. In fact those guys, they had some of their own ECM [electronic countermeasures] gear on there and generic type things and it was kind of funny. They did not like us to lock them up with our radar so unbeknownst to some of us the first time you did that they just about had enough power to melt the feed-horn in the APQ-72 radar, and so the word quickly passed around not to be doing that.

Then we used to fly BARCAPs [barrier combat air patrol] and we'd go up and relieve the Navy squadrons on Yankee Station. It seemed like when we did that we always got the midnight to six a.m. shift but those were the primary missions, you know, direct air support, close air support, MIGCAP/BARCAP, TPQs [a type of ground radar directed bombing], a lot of times in the bad weather and at night. I think those were the major types of missions, if you will.

I remember getting there and we had no ECM gear in the airplanes in the states and so that was the first thing I did when I got there was, one of the RIOs who'd been there a while took me out and showed me how to bit-check and figure out what our ECM gear was because I'd never seen it before.

ALLISON: It was not working or it just wasn't in there?

NYLAND: We just didn't have it in there because if it was up I guess it all went to Vietnam and so I'd never even seen it before.

ALLISON: There were just holes in the panel there where it should have been?

NYLAND: Holes in the panels or sometimes part of the system would be there but it wouldn't be hooked up to anything.

ALLISON: I see.

NYLAND: You know all the good parts would be; the guts of it would be somewhere else. So that was pretty interesting.

So he showed me how to check it, and then he took you around and showed you, "Here's what the RIOs did." RIOs used to preflight the ordnance and the pilots did the airplane.

ALLISON: For a pre-flight?

NYLAND: Yes. And the RIO also would be the last . . . if you got your brief and it wasn't a scheduled hop and you got it on the "hot pad," then the RIO would stay and take the brief while the pilot went out and got the airplane started. Then you'd come out and you'd brief the other members of the section or division right before you got ready to taxi out.

ALLISON: How long did you have to get launched in something like that?

NYLAND: Well on a "hot pad" you stood different varying alerts and I guess the shortest one was the immediate one and I mean we could be airborne in under ten minutes.
It was already hooked up to a starter unit, it had been pre-flighted. We'd be sitting in the hot pad in our gear unless it was cool enough to be outside and we'd just be lounging around the airplane. And you'd get that brief, that phone would ring and horns would start and the pilot would run out to get it started. You'd get the brief and head on out and go do it.

ALLISON: And would that be usually for a close air support kind of thing?

NYLAND: Generally for close air support. Troops in contact, you know for the "hot pad", because it was designed to be responsive like that and I guess we had three levels, you know the Immediate CAS and then we probably had somebody on a 10-minute alert and then we probably had others that were on maybe 30 minutes or whatever.

ALLISON: I see.

NYLAND: And I don't remember exactly but there seemed like there were three different levels. Sometimes you'd lay in there in your gear and sometimes you wouldn't be in your gear but you still put the time in getting ready.

ALLISON: But you're still down there on the ramp somewhere.

NYLAND: Well we had a big old double-wide that was almost like a tractor trailer with no tractor and it was air-conditioned most of the time and it had a big old fan in there. We had a little hot plate in there. We'd cook C-Rats and just sit in there and I can't remember exactly how long we'd stay in the pad at a time but we'd just go in there and wait. But the phone rang and away you went and if it didn't when your period was over then you'd go fly either a scheduled mission or go back to work.

ALLISON: Did you generally fly every day or stay in a hot pad alert?

NYLAND: Yes, pretty much, and we were kind of short of RIOs. I think we only had like ten or so maybe that were effective in the squadron. So we pretty much flew every day or at least stood the "Hot Pad" anyway.

Next we had a signup sheet too for add-on missions that came down and if you were around and wanted to go on another you could keep your name on a signup sheet and they'd come hunt you down and, you know something that was a pre-planned kind of a sortie.

ALLISON: Yes, for a day or two in advance you mean?

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: "Snivel."

NYLAND: Yes. There wasn't much sniveling not to fly. Unless you got some guys when they got within 30 days of going home they started to get a little more cautious about how often they wanted to go.

But we had a pretty young squadron. I think the CO was Lieutenant Colonel Tom Christy as I recall . . .

ALLISON: Who was that; the CO?

NYLAND: His call sign was "Scotch". I'll be darned; I can't think who it is now.

ALLISON: I can probably find out from those command chronologies. That was 314?

NYLAND: Yes, 314, and this is June/July of '70 and Major "Banana" Bob Roach was the OpsO.

ALLISON: Call sign "Banana"?

NYLAND: "Banana". And I think our maintenance officer was a Major Kime. I forget who was the XO [executive officer]. Maybe Banana Roach was the XO and Jim Gress was the OpsO and that was all the majors we had, the rest were all captains and lieutenants. The 1 [administrative officer] was a captain and the 4 [supply or logistics officer] was a captain and the rest of us; just herds and herds of lieutenants running around.

ALLISON: Were you assigned a collateral duty?

NYLAND: Yes, I worked in the 4 shop. I was IMRL [individual maintenance readiness list] officer.

ALLISON: Is that right, IMRL?

NYLAND: Yes. That's like tie-downs and chocks and all that. I was also the embark officer.

ALLISON: Which is a pretty good job in itself.

NYLAND: Yes it was. In fact I mean particularly since we closed down Chu Lai and gave it to the Americal Division and when we did that I got pretty busy learning about embarkation and med decks [???] and how you put all that together and everything to send the stuff back to El Toro.

ALLISON: I see, that's right.

NYLAND: And so I worked in the IMRL and the embark the whole time when I was in 314.

ALLISON: That was during the time when the Marine Corps was pulling out.

NYLAND: Yes, we started downsizing and in Chu Lai we had 314, [VMFA-] 122, a squadron of A-4s; I think it was the Tomcats; [VMA-] 311. At one point [VMFA-] 115 was there but I think they moved up to Da Nang first and what happened was 314 and 122 came out of country and 122 went to Hawaii and 314 went to the West Coast. So a bunch of us got to transpac [trans-Pacific flight] airplanes, flew them from -- I guess we went from Chu Lai to Cubi Point and then from Cubi Point to Guam as I recall. It was about 1,400 miles and the winds were not good enough for us to go straight to Guam, so we went up to Kadena and then from Kadena to Guam, which is only about 1,200 miles and we could do that. Then we just had a spare tanker waiting about a hundred miles short of Guam in case we had a problem. Then we flew from there to Wake and then from Wake to Midway and from Midway into Hawaii, and that's as far as I went on that transpac. Those of us that were going to go back in-country, we stopped in Hawaii. Of course it was kind of a hardship. There was a week before they could get us an airplane to go back so it was pretty tough [laughter].

ALLISON: That would have been right around the turn of the year, wouldn't it?

NYLAND: Yes it was.

ALLISON: Right at the end of the '70.

NYLAND: Yes, I can go pull my logbook but I think the transpac was in September or October, somewhere in there. And so that was pretty good.

I had a canopy problem on my jet. I'll never forget it. I took off out of Chu Lai and, oh, about an hour out of the Philippines I hear this "dunk." You know I look around and the tapes are lined up, everything seems to be okay, and we get on the ground at Cubi Point

[Philippines] and we turn off the runway and I go to raise my canopy and it comes up and what had happened was the shear pin had sheared from some kind of torsion on it, mechanically droops off to the right like that [chuckle] and I look at it and go, "Holy cow, what is that?" And so they worked on it that night and the next day I cycled it on the flight line, checked good and we took off for Kadena and we're about an hour airborne and I hear the "dunk." "Oh no!" [laughter] I said. "Well I'm not touching anything." Sure enough we get to Kadena and I wait until they cleared the runway and the flight line and I raise that canopy and it goes "dunk." Somehow they re-rigged it finally in Kadena and it didn't do it anymore after that.

ALLISON: Wow, I never heard of that before.

NYLAND: It was pretty exciting [laughter]. I hadn't either.

ALLISON: And then you took them on across the . . . .

NYLAND: Then we took them across the pond, and like I said, those of us that were going back in-country, we stopped in Hawaii and then waited for transport and we caught the bird out of there and went to Clark [Air Force Base, Philippines]. We spent a couple days in Clark kind of goofing off and waiting and then back into Da Nang and I joined MACS [Marine Air Control Squadron] -4.

ALLISON: Oh, did you?

NYLAND: They were of course out of sight, out of mind, and the squadron got some taskers while we were gone and my good friend Dick Bauman who'd been in 314 with me, they signed him up to be the admin officer at MACS-4. They signed me up to go be an air controller because they said, "They need guys that can talk on the radios and you're a RIO. You can talk on the radio so you can go do this." And one of my other good buddies, Ted Bernsick, he ended up at the [First Marine Aircraft] Wing as the embark officer. So the transpac was not so good when the quotas came in [laughter].

ALLISON: That's not good.

NYLAND: You know how that works.

ALLISON: Good deal bad deal.

NYLAND: Yes.

So I went up to MACS-4 up on Monkey Mountain, "Vice Squad" and . . .

ALLISON: That was your call sign?

NYLAND: "Vice Squad" was the call sign and we ran the radars up there on Monkey Mountain.

ALLISON: Doing GCI [ground controlled intercepts] stuff?

NYLAND: Some GCI, a lot of flight following and all hand-offs to everybody going into Da Nang. We'd follow the guys off the boat. You know if they were going over into Laos we'd follow them as far as the edge of the radar and then turn them over to either "Moonbeam" or "Hillsboro" who were the two airborne controllers. I guess they're the equivalent of the ABCCC [airborne command and control center] today.

But it was "Moonbeam" at night and "Hillsboro" during the day and when you got over there that's who you'd check in with to find out that you're going to go up to Chapone [Laos] or you're going to go over to Nakhon Phanon [Thailand] or wherever you're going to drop ordnance whenever we worked in Laos.

ALLISON: I see, sort of in-flight following.

NYLAND: So a lot of in-flight following, not much in the way of doing, you know, not doing intercepts or real tactical but keeping track of them and handing them off. And occasionally early in the morning sometimes we could do some interception on some F-4s and do that and we'd have a tanker up or something, but not a lot.

ALLISON: You'd give them a vector or something?

NYLAND: Right. And unfortunately I stayed up there for, I was there for three months I guess.

We used to come down off the mountain and fly, come down and fly a couple or three hops in a 24-hour down period and then go back up on the mountain and I ultimately qualified as a Senior Air Director, which was pretty neat. Then my ground job up there was, I was also the ground defense platoon commander because in Chu Lai all of us at one point or another all became ground defense officer at night and you did the perimeter at Chu Lai. And so I guess when they saw that in my OQR [officer's qualification record] and I got to Monkey Mountain, in addition to putting me as a controller they made me the Ground Defense Platoon Commander. So I had my little platoon and we used to do training and sweeps and stuff on the mountains but then we'd come down and fly. I think the best I ever did was one time I think I got either four or five hops in 20 hours and went back up.

ALLISON: Wow, just short hops.

NYLAND: Yes, most of them were pretty short hops. You know we usually didn't tank unless we were doing MIGCAPs or BarCAPs and you'd get airborne and you'd get somewhere and you'd get the ordnance off. Usually one run for lead, two for dash-2 [wingman], maybe a little more than that if you were dropping "snake [eye]" [retarded bombs] and "nape" [napalm] and troops in contact and you needed to get in there and place them really well.

ALLISON: What do you mean one run for lead; you mean one run ripple all?

NYLAND: Yes, one run ripple all.

ALLISON: And then dash-2 would make two runs. Why would he make two?

NYLAND: Well that was just the way the tactics had evolved by the time I got there or maybe lead would make two and dash-2 would make one but then always try to come from a different direction when you knew you were taking fire. Some of them where you were out there going after enemy bunkers or tunnels in the tree lines and stuff, then we might make a couple of runs each and actually, almost like a racetrack pattern, back at Loom Lobby [a bombing target at Yuma, Arizona] or Panel Stager [same thing]. But if you were taking fire nobody made a lot of runs and you didn't make them from the same direction. You know obviously there were some where you had to make a couple of runs if you were carrying snake and nape. They require a little bit different mil settings. But although we used to go to Laos sometimes and we'd be carrying 500-pounders and Zuni rockets we had some smart guys and they came up with a mil setting that put it about at the middle and we'd still do one run. And if you were over toward Chapone where they had a lot of active AAA, well then, as we used to say, "One run, shit and 'git'" [laughter]. That was pretty interesting.

ALLISON: Did you ever get hit; did you get shot at fairly frequently?

NYLAND: Yes, we got hit. You know you got used to looking down there and seeing those tracers I guess, as used to it as you ever could get, and we'd come home with a couple of holes in the stabilator or in the wing or in the belly but none of them were ever very bad. I mean nothing ever caused me to have to get out of an airplane.

ALLISON: Nothing hit the engine or any critical parts?

NYLAND: No, in fact I've had more occasions subsequent to Vietnam to think about getting out of one than I did over there. Now that partly could be because I was so young and

naïve. I mean I arrived there with a grand total, I think, of either 75 or 80 hours in the airplane so I wasn't exactly . . . .

ALLISON: So you were just kind of taking it all in.

NYLAND: Yes, I was still partly in awe and partly trying to stay ahead of the airplane. It was interesting though, one thing that I recall is we still have the same problem as we had then with refueling from the standpoint of Air Force style or basket style. I remember one morning getting scrambled out of Chu Lai and I mean they wanted us in a hurry and it was to get up with some B-52s, and I mean we're going up there in burner – I mean they're giving us the gate call. We are smoking – and one young controller comes up and says, "Sir, are you going to need a tank?" I said, "Yes, we will," and he said, "Can you tank off of Air Force tankers?" I said, "No, I've got to have a basket." So they let us go a little while longer and then they came up and asked the same question again. Then finally we got a young guy in there who said, "Sir, I told them you couldn't tank off an Air Force tanker." About that time I said, "So you're telling us we don't have a tanker?" He said, "No, Sir." Man, we're just about on fumes, you know, when we got back into Chu Lai. I mean we had just pulled the power back trying to make gas. But amazing to me we still have this disparity in the way we refuel our tactical airplanes, whether it's the drogue or the hose.

ALLISON: That is amazing.

NYLAND: And it would seem to me one of the more interoperable things that we could easily fix over the course of time from the airplanes that we've brought in since the days we were all flying F-4s is that we might have fixed that one but I think we are taking steps to get closer now. I see that in the JROC [joint requirements oversight council] but it's kind of amazing to think that a problem that we had and identified in 1970 as an issue for interoperability is still around.

Now they take the drogue off and they put the short little hose and the steel basket on there.

ALLISON: Okay, they didn't have that in those days.

NYLAND: Well they did but they had to be configured for it.

ALLISON: Beforehand, yes.

NYLAND: And we can't do that in the air.

ALLISON: I see, yes.

NYLAND: And so if you're screaming up there and all he's got is that drogue, I mean all he's got is the steerable nozzle, that's supposed to go into the receptacle behind the cockpit, no go.

And then when we went up to fly the BarCAPs off Yankee Station we always took Marine [KC-] 130 tankers up there because we'd get up there and it would be normally a two hour mission. We'd take off, we'd get up there, we'd be on station for about 30 minutes and then we'd go refuel and come back on station again and then go again if we needed to. But it was interesting to go racing up there and just about put yourself in extremis for fuel and find out that you couldn't get a tanker [chuckle].

ALLISON: That's right.

Did you normally fly with centerlines or wing tanks or none of the above?

NYLAND: Actually we varied it around. We probably flew more with wing tanks than anything because it gave us better ability to haul bombs and so we'd carry 18, 500-pounders – is that right, 12 I guess – and two wing-tanks or 7,000-pounders. But using that centerline station allowed you to put the MER [multiple ejector rack] right there on centerline.

ALLISON: Which would carry six 500-pounders, right?

NYLAND: Yes, and then on the internal wings we carried the triple ejector racks and the three bombs or three nape cans on there, although sometimes we flew what we called the super bomber and that was a clean airplane. The MERs and TERs all together carried 24, 500-pound bombs. But I mean that thing had some drag and so you were looking for a mission probably between Chu Lai and Da Nang and not too much further away.

ALLISON: And a tanker.

NYLAND: We also would carry wall-to-wall nape on occasion. But most common I would say was probably wing tanks.

ALLISON: With a mixed load or with . . . ?

NYLAND: Mixed load and then of course we carried Sparrows [radar guided air to air missile] and [Side] Winders [infrared air to air missile] on every hop. There were usually two Sparrows and two Winders and snake and nape was a common mix, you know just straight 500-pounders or 1,000-pounders with or without daisy cutters. It was a pretty standard mix; Rockeye, 5-inch Zunis, even 19-shot 2.75 rockets, but more commonly the 5-inch rockets.

ALLISON: And they would have to load them out by what type of mission you were going to fly I guess.

NYLAND: Yes, what they would do is if it was a scheduled mission then the ordnance would reflect the mission. If you were on the hot pad quite often you'd be carrying snake and nape, although we had occasions where we had slick bombs [non-retarded] and you just had to understand where the frag pattern was going to be and we actually had guys who fragged themselves . . .

ALLISON: Did you?

NYLAND: … you know if there were troops in contact. You had to make that decision to go in there and get down in what would normally be snake altitude with a slick bomb and . . . .

ALLISON: You would still do it?

NYLAND: Yes, sometimes.

ALLISON: Right, for sort of an extremis situation on the ground where you really had to get in there.

NYLAND: Sure, get in there, I mean crummy weather and low ceilings, low altitude and everything. But if we could, if there were Marines in contact then we'd get in there.

ALLISON: Did you get feedback from FACs [forward air controllers] or anybody about the effectiveness of CAS [close air support]?

NYLAND: Yes, you used to get it right then usually. You always had to take . . . and that was one of the things that a RIO did was as you came off target and called Winchester [code for "out of ordnance"] then you'd take the brief and they'd give you your BDA [bomb damage assessment]. You know they'd give you 80 over 100 or 100 over 100. They'd tell you what was destroyed and what was not destroyed and then you took that and you married it up with what you got when you got there, which was, "This is your DE Number [???], here's your coordinates and you can expect fire" or "don't expect fire", and then when you got back you immediately went to the "2-shop" [intelligence office] and debriefed it all. So the feedback was pretty much immediate. Once in a while you'd get a call back if you did something that really helped them out and a FAC would come out of the field and they'd call and say, "I want to know who was flying 'Love Bug'" or whatever call sign. When we were MAG-13 in Chu Lai that was our call sign -Love Bug.

Then when we flew BarCAPs we were "Pest Killer" and I think when we flew the MiGCAPs we were "Ring Neck", but anyway they were all set. But the FAC would come back and he'd call in and say, "I wonder who Love Bug Zero One was on such and such a date. He saved our bacon. You know he got it in there really good." And sometimes even guys were written up for awards that way. His FAC would come back and say, "I've never seen anybody do that before and I want to know the aircrew's names because I'm over here with battalion X and I'm going to write them up for an award." But by in large your feedback was pretty much immediate and really consisted of the BDA either from the ground FAC or --we did an awful lot of work with the OV-10 FACs, which were ours, which were "Hostage" and sometimes with "Playboy," which was the TA-4; the FastFACs. Then we did an awful lot of work with the Air Force guys particularly when we went to Laos. And some of the Army guys.

ALLISON: That would be the "Barrel Roll" missions. Did they call them "Barrel Roll" at that time?

NYLAND: I don't recall that name. I looked at that on that piece of paper you gave me. There were other names that I can't recall.

ALLISON: They called it Barrel Roll. That was the missions that were flown to Laos to support anti-Communist forces.

NYLAND: Well I've never heard them called that. All I knew was we're going to Laos and usually it was Chapone and usually it was going to be 45 degrees, high-dive, one run and go.

ALLISON: Dropping slick MK-82s or something.

NYLAND: Or 1,000-pounders, combined with Rockeye or sometimes with 5-inch rockets. And like I said, it was either Moonbeam if you were over there at night or Hillsboro during the day.

ALLISON: And you'd contact the FAC once you got there.

NYLAND: "Nail" was the FAC for the OV-10s.

ALLISON: Oh, okay, Air Force OV-10s.

NYLAND: Well they were Air Force OV-10s and if the call sign was "Nail" I think it was an all-Air Force crew. If they were "Raven" then they were other governmental agency FACs.

ALLISON: Okay. This would be in Laos?

NYLAND: Right.

ALLISON: So that's where there was a lot of ground fire I bet in . . .

NYLAND: Oh yes, you'd get it there but you could get it in the Ashau Valley, that was another place. In fact they would be set up and we used to talk to each other and say, "You know, they must be chained to those guns to stay there and keep cranking that stuff off knowing here we'd come with these bombs." And I mean you'd be coming in there and you'd just be jinking that airplane and moving like crazy and those little red tracers are whipping by your canopy and you'd go in there and drop a bunch of snake and turn back around, and by the time you got back around again they're shooting again. It was amazing and we had guys who got caught in cross-fires and had to step out of airplanes. But you could find fire almost anywhere but it was almost always there going to Laos

ALLISON: Probably the ZSU-23s or the . . .

NYLAND: Yes, 23s and 57s were the most common.

ALLISON: Any SAMs [surface to air missiles] or anything like that?

NYLAND: Yes, as a matter of fact I'll never forget the first time I saw a SAM. I was on a MiGCAP escorting B-52s and in the low-altitude block we had a flight of "Wild Weasels" the Air Force "Thuds" [F-105s], and I guess we were in the medium block with a high block, I forget, but we were flying over a, you know the under cast was beneath us and so we were in a racetrack [pattern] and all of a sudden -- none of the EW [electronic warning] gear went off, not a one, and this big pole comes out of those clouds and comes – we're flying in combat spread – and that thing comes right up between the two of our airplanes. And I'm sitting there no doubt with my mouth agape and I watch this thing come up right between two airplanes and goes off. And when we go back they impounded the airplanes and checked out the RHAW [radar warning and homing] gear and everything and I think they ultimately thought it was probably launched up there ballistically or had a track and lost the track but launched up there anyway. So I mean you could see a little bit of everything.

ALLISON: So they probably just heard something up there and fired it.

NYLAND: Well I don't think they could have done that because we were too high. We were in the 20s and higher and the "Wild Weasels" were below us and they had no RHAW gear indications either but they would -- if they, depending on your RHAW gear if they didn't lock you up you never got all the little beep beep sounds that you may or may not get while

they're just tracking. So they could have just shot it up there on sort of a range only kind of thing.

ALLISON: SAM-2 ?

NYLAND: Yes, we couldn't decide whether it was a 2. We thought it was a 2 but it could have been a 3. But I mean you never forget it. I mean I can still see it. We were going north and I'm on the left side in combat spread. I can see that thing and I'm just [laughter] -- it blows up right over my right shoulder.

ALLISON: So this would have been up in North Vietnam.

NYLAND: While I was up in the corner of Laos and up in the corner up there. The B-52s went up there towards, up along the trail.

ALLISON: Did you ever go up into North Vietnam on missions?

NYLAND: I didn't go way north on planned missions. I think while I was there, there were a couple of days, I probably slipped into the north half a dozen times. There used to be a place up there called "Dog Bone Lake" and we used to get a fair amount of activity in there. You could find yourself maybe a little bit north at times but not any huge incursion into the north but made it into Laos and made it into Cambodia.

ALLISON: Did you ever get a vector on a MiG?

NYLAND: Well we got a couple of vectors but nothing ever panned out of them and most of them, by the time they got you out of your racetrack pattern they'd already determined it was not actually a MiG --so I never got one that I can recall. I know I never got one that turned out to be anything. You know we made some runs but there was never anything we could shoot at. That's why we'd gone with BARCAPs. We figured that was our best chance.

ALLISON: So helping the Navy air over there.

NYLAND: Yes, flying those. And then that was up there off of Yankee Station and I was working with the cruisers.

ALLISON: Did you get there in time to go to Cambodia? The Cambodian incursion had begun in April.

NYLAND: Yes, we went over there and I dropped a few bombs. I don't remember how many times but I do recall getting over there as well as the Laos piece so it wasn't all just in-country. Most of the stuff we did in-country though was pretty much, I would say -- I don't recall much of ever going much more than 20 to 30 miles south of Chu Lai and from there to

the north. We did a lot of work up around Quang Tri and Hue and up there; all those TacANs [tactical air navigation]. In fact I still remember when we were Channel 74 at Chu Lai and Hue was 69 and Quang Tri was 103.

We knew everybody who was there and who to check in with, and yes --coming out of Chu Lai we'd take off out of there, we'd be Love Bug 002; "Two Fox Fours out of 74" carrying and then we'd give them the ordnance load with the delta codes (eg D-2s were slick 500 pound bombs) and then we'd be on our way.

ALLISON: What do you mean out of 74; the TacAN station?

NYLAND: Yes, out of Chu Lai. Instead of saying, "Out of Chu Lai" we kind of made our own language. I guess that was early text-messaging [laughter].

ALLISON: Right.

That's the only kind of nav gear you had.

NYLAND: TacAN and nav computer.

ALLISON: But did you use a nav computer?

NYLAND: I used a nav computer. I've always been a believer in it and as you recall when we were in [VMFA-] 212 I would use them religiously and when I commanded [VMFA-] 232 they worked.

ALLISON: Is that right?

NYLAND: And it was a good piece of gear if you used it. So I learned to use it in Vietnam and I always used it.

ALLISON: Yes, I remember you preached it.

NYLAND: Because the TacANs, you know in the F-4 it was not that reliable. And the ADF [automatic direction finder] and MBD beacon, that's only good for part of the time, but that's all we had, you know that and your map.

ALLISON: Right.

Did you have to do some map-reading; map navigation, low-level type of navigation?

NYLAND: We didn't really run that much in the way of low-level missions. We would come down from altitude to whatever we were going to do. You know it was usually get to the point, hook up with the FAC and then, you know if you came in at medium altitude; 15-16,000 feet, then he'd bring you on down and tell you where he wanted you to be and mark the target, and then we'd figure out, "Okay, this kind of ordnance. This is the altitude we

want to be out by" and figure out our proper altitude and then figure out what altitude we'd come in from; whether we'd come in at a 30-degree dive or a 45-degree dive or a 10-degree dive.

ALLISON: A lot of lay down?

NYLAND: Yes, we dived on some, level lay down with snake and nape, troops in contact.

ALLISON: You did that; get real low?

NYLAND: Oh yes, and I mean the pilots at that point, you know there was no more worrying and standby and mark and everything. I mean they were right down there and they would watch it. They'd just look for the target to go under the nose of the F-4. It would be like a "One potato, two potato" and then let them go and you'd feel "G" coming on the airplane [chuckle].

ALLISON: Those would be exciting kind of missions.

NYLAND: Yes, they were pretty exciting. What was really exciting was when the FACs would really get into it and they'd just be screaming, "Oh, great hit! Oh man!" [Chuckle]. "All we got down here is crispy critters, great! Come around again." And that always made you feel good when you knew you'd gotten the bad guys off the Marine's doorstep there.

ALLISON: You know the good thing about the F-4, it could carry so much ordnance.

NYLAND: Well I mean -- and it had such big motors. You know it was living proof that you could power anything to fly with enough thrust.

ALLISON: Right.

NYLAND: And we used to fly that thing at max gross. We'd run down that runway in Chu Lai and then lift off. In fact we didn't even set the air-conditioner in the F-4 until you were airborne because we didn't want to draw that 17th -stage bleed air off to run the AC.

ALLISON: You needed that.

NYLAND: Yes. Well we had F-4Bs with two wing-tanks, nine 500-pounders, two Sparrows and two Sidewinders, and some guys said that was slightly over max gross. Other guys said it was right at max gross.

ALLISON: Depending on temperature maybe.

NYLAND: Well and the heat down there in the summertime. It used to get so hot down there in Chu Lai that the potting compound in the cannon plugs would run.

ALLISON: Oh really?

NYLAND: And so you could look down, you'd be getting ready to go flying and you could look down and there this stuff would be dripping on your boots-dripping out of the cannon plug. They had to change the mix in that stuff when they went in for rework to make it less susceptible to the heat, and like I said, we never used the air conditioning system until after you were already airborne in the summertime down there.

ALLISON: How long was that runway at Chu Lai?

NYLAND: Chu Lai; I think we had about 10,000 feet down there.

ALLISON: You still needed it all though.

NYLAND: Oh yes. I mean it was a long run. It was an interesting runway. It was highly crowned to keep the water off. I mean originally Chu Lai was a SATS [short airfield for tactical support] field and then they put in the long runway. But it was very, very crowned and so if you came in there to take the wire you'd best be on centerline or you could get slewed to one side or the other.

ALLISON: I can see that would be easy to do.

NYLAND: So it was an interesting runway.

ALLISON: Did you have long field, short field gear?

NYLAND: Oh yes, we had all the gear; long-field, mid-field and short field.

ALLISON: Did you usually roll out?

NYLAND: We usually rolled out. We usually used our drag-chute and rolled out and then bring them back in and they'd repack them. But I've also come in and trapped and gone in and loaded while I was being refueled because we had to get back out.

ALLISON: They didn't have any stipulations against doing that?

NYLAND: No, not if there were Marines in contact, and they may have had them but I surely didn't know of them as a first lieutenant.

I can remember sitting in the fuel pit on the hose and feeling those guys come up and slam bombs into those MERs and TERs and away you went.

ALLISON: Did you fly more than, you mentioned four or five hours' worth or missions in 20 hours?

NYLAND: Yes, you know that was when I was at Vice Squad up at Monkey Mountain and so my time to come down and fly was limited, and I would come down on a day off and I'd just try to cram as many in as I could. And then go back up there and work for another week

or however long. So otherwise I probably used to fly once or twice a day would be more the norm.

ALLISON: Did you take a nine-line brief from the FACs or was it some sort of abbreviation?

NYLAND: It was shorter than the nine-line brief that we use today.

ALLISON: The nine-line brief hadn't been invented yet?

NYLAND: I don't think it had. It was shorter than that. It had the direction they wanted you to come in and the direction of pull, location of friendlies, target elevation, and I think that was all there was. There might have been a fifth element but it was not a nine-line brief like we came to develop. But those were the things and you had to always read back – maybe there were more things but those were the ones you had to read back. But anyway, I don't think it was a full nine-line brief like we came to do after we got MAWTS [Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron] and really got the right doctrine and a procedure into it. I think it was pretty short and straight to the point and then you'd be in there.

ALLISON: Was there was much difference when you were working CAS with Marines as opposed to say Army or ARVN [Army, Republic of Vietnam] or maybe Laotian troops?

NYLAND: I don't think I ever worked with Laotian troops or ARVN. I worked with the VNAF [Vietnamese Air Force] FACs a couple of times. I think most of the ground FACs that I worked with were all Marines and then airborne we worked with everybody from Marine to Air Force to Army to VNAVF.

ALLISON: Could you tell much difference in procedures?

NYLAND: Yes. I mean it was obviously easiest to work with the Marine FACs because we all pretty much had the same basic idea but I think they were all darn good. I mean we'd go up there and get with the Air Force and the Army in those little push-pull airplanes [Cessna 02 Skymasters] or [Cessna] 01s and everybody was pretty professional, and we all got the same pieces of information. You always checked in and gave them your ordnance, which was delta coded, like delta-2 was a 500-pounder and a delta-2A was a snake eye. I think Delta-7s were nape. I can't remember all of them now but those were a couple of them; Delta-2s and Delta-7s. Maybe 9 was Nape and delta-7 was a missile. But anyway, you checked in. There were certain elements they wanted from you; "What was your ordnance? How long could you stay on station," and we expected back from them, "Here's what your target is. Here's a

description. Here's the direction I want you to come in from; direction of pull", anything that you had to be on the lookout for during that, whether or not you were going to take fire usually based on whether he'd had some or not. And then again, like I said, target elevation, coordinates, and friendly positions.

ALLISON: Then he'd go in and mark the target.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: Shoot a rocket at it.

NYLAND: Yes, shoot in with a WP [willie peter – white phosphorous rocket], mark it and then you'd roll in and then usually dash-2 would get adjusted off of lead's hit and say, "Lead's hit's right there. Put it right on his smoke", or "Come north 50 meters", and pretty much that part I think of close control is probably pretty much unchanged.

ALLISON: Probably so.

NYLAND: I mean you either do that professionally and do it well or you don't do it at all, and they were really good. Most of them I thought were pretty darn good.

ALLISON: Okay.

Did you do any work at night?

NYLAND: Oh yes.

ALLISON: I know you mentioned the nighttime BaRCAPs.

NYLAND: Yes, we did the BaRCAPs and sometimes MiGCAPs. We would do TPQs at night. And sometimes we'd drop over Laos at night and escort the A-6s or the RF-4s at night.

ALLISON: Right, I was going to ask about the A-6s. They called it . . .

NYLAND: Buddy-bombing.

ALLISON: Buddy-bombing?

NYLAND: Buddy-bombing [chuckle].

ALLISON: Yes, on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, right?

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: So you did some of that?

NYLAND: Yes, we'd fly sort of a loose trail on them and . . .

ALLISON: Wait for somebody to shoot at them.

NYLAND: They'd shoot and they'd roll in, we'd roll in behind them and then we'd go home.

ALLISON: Yes, and you'd drop on where they were being shot at from on those Commando Hunt missions.

NYLAND: Yes, it was pretty good. And you know the guys that were really good at that were the Nail FACs. Now those guys were flying out of, I think they flew out of Nakhon Phenom. Maybe some of them flew out of Udorn too. But they were really good at finding where the guns were and then they'd say, "Okay, I got one" [chuckle]. We'd be up there loping around at high altitude and then run over there.

ALLISON: They'd find them?

NYLAND: They'd find them. They'd draw that fire [chuckle] and we'd go over there, one run and dump it all.

ALLISON: That was on the Ho Chi Minh Trail though too?

NYLAND: Yes, out there and in Laos.

ALLISON: So they were sort of baiting them?

NYLAND: Sometimes they did, yes. The Nail guys, they were . . .

ALLISON: Was that an Air Force outfit?

NYLAND: Yes, pretty aggressive guys.

ALLISON: Flying the . . .

NYLAND: OV-10s. Yes, I think they were flying OV-10s and 02s maybe.

ALLISON: So the TPQ system worked pretty good?

NYLAND: Yes, you know the old ASRAT [air surveillance radar and targeting] was not that bad. I mean you didn't have as many guys volunteering for that mission because you'd just get up to altitude and then, you know, up 200 feet, right two degrees and just go up there and, "Okay, stand by, mark, mark", and drop your bombs and go home. I suppose if it was doing good that was okay but it wasn't exactly an exciting mission and it was usually a night mission.

And so you didn't find too many guys clambering to do them but I've talked to some guys that had been TPQ-10 controllers on the ground and they said that it was, I mean they kept it running and it was pretty accurate and so we did them.

ALLISON: You talked about weather. I guess that was always an issue.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: Did you ever get in any tight situations?

NYLAND: Yes, particularly during the monsoon season because you actually could almost, if you got high enough you could watch these belts of rain move back and forth in the monsoon season. And the hard part was, you know the weather could get bad, which was one issue, but the other one was if you didn't use your ordnance and you had to come back, I can remember coming home a couple of times with daisy cutters [fuse extenders] and if you've got the long one on there; the 18-inch fuse, well you can't trap with that so you come back to Chu Lai and it's raining so there you are and you've got to go to Ubon [Air Force Base, Thailand] or Udorn [Air Force Base, Thailand] because the rain belt is on you and it's going to be dry and sunny over there most likely. So that was probably the most common weather thing would be you'd have to divert over to Ubon or Udorn. That was our two primaries to go where the weather was dry if you had to trap.

ALLISON: Was that frequent?

NYLAND: Oh yes, in fact we used to like to go over there actually because it was an Air Force base and the club was really nice, and it was also a good place to go and if you're there and you can stay overnight you'd go out in the village and get clothes made and get jewelry. We used to have a [chuckle] --the Air Force used to look at us when we'd come in there. You know we'd bring in those dirty F-4s. I mean they were dirty. They would fly but they were dirty. And we'd hop out -- I remember one time we hopped out, there were four first lieutenants, Air Force just looked at us saying, "Well, who's in charge of this?" So we knew right then that they were dazzled so we played the old, "Well hey, I did it last time so you must have it today." [Chuckle] Then they'd download our ordnance. We'd go in their headquarters and call back to Chu Lai and they'd say, "Well it's still raining, stay the night and bring the jet back in the morning," or whatever. But yes, I made a fair amount of trips. I made it into Nakhon Phanon, Ubon, Udorn, all three.

And we could always go to Da Nang too but if it was raining in Chu Lai there was a good chance it was raining in Da Nang because it was so close.

ALLISON: Yes, the dirty F-4. I've heard that story before I think. They would almost want to down the plane.

NYLAND: Yes, well they didn't like them. You know they would leak when you turn them up. You'd get a little hydraulic leak in the speed brake or one of your ailerons or something and they'd be just shaking their heads and we would say, "Hey, if it's leaking we've got fluid. We're out of here." But I mean there wasn't much time for washing airplanes so wherever there was a little leak of something pretty soon the whole airplane, you know you get a pretty dark grey airplane. Plus, you know the guys climbing all over it to pre-flight it or work on it. But they were pretty good airplanes. Some of them, you know the radars early on took a lot of work. The weather was hard on the radios. I think we averaged something, when I first got to Chu Lai we were averaging something like 2.6, 2.7 hours on a radio before we'd have to change it out.

We had one airplane too that was, you'd open up the book and it said, "Day VFR, wingman only!"

ALLISON: [Chuckle].

NYLAND: Because whatever they did, no matter how many times they changed that radio that radio had about like a three-mile range, and you know it could talk to its lead and that was it.

ALLISON: Yes, I remember the radios were terrible.

NYLAND: Yes, and they were worse over there with the humidity and all the problems with the sand down there in Chu Lai.

I remember too the water in Chu Lai – I'll never forget – the water was in old fuel bags so the water had sort of a green tinge to it out there on the flight line where they kept it in the big jug out there, and I guess it probably kept you regular but I'm not sure [chuckle] what the long effect was if it had a little JP mixed in with it.

ALLISON: I bet that helped. And what about food; I mean did they have a good mess hall there?

NYLAND: Yes, they had a great mess hall in Chu Lai, and in Da Nang when I got up there. But a good mess hall. You know about once a month we'd even have a, they'd try to get in some down-time and bring in some steaks and burn them on a big grill outside the mess hall, but the chow was good. The only thing I remember about the chow was it seemed like the docs [Navy medical personnel] must have been worried we were going to get scurvy or something because it seemed like they put green peppers in everything.

When I first came home from Chu Lai and Da Nang I said, "I am never eating green peppers ever again", and I don't know why but I mean it just stuck with me. It was in the salad. It was in the eggs. It was in the gravy. But the chow was great. You know you go through there and the Marines were making omelets and stuff in the morning. I drank an awful lot of bug juice. But of course I always liked mess hall food anyway. It seemed pretty good to me and at Chu Lai we had a little outdoor club in the evenings and you could get a hamburger in there or some grilled chicken or something like that.

ALLISON: Right. Did they allow drinking on base then?

NYLAND: They did. We used to go to the club at Chu Lai. The drink of the night was a dime and I think the regular drinks were 25 or 35 cents. You could buy a bottle of Mateus for 90 cents [laughter]. So I mean with a dollar you could be a giant or with MPC: military payment certificates. You know we had funny money. And that was pretty exciting.

ALLISON: So you really didn't carry around American money, you would convert it to MPC?

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: I guess that was a pretty popular form of entertainment. I mean as far as recreation goes it was just go to the Club.

NYLAND: Go to the Club. You know they had a movie every night and then they'd get the shows to come in but when the shows came they'd try to get more people and they'd usually do them down in one of the hangers.

ALLISON: The USO [United Service Organizations].

NYLAND: They'd come from Australia or come from Cubi Point or wherever. I guess it was hard to know in my little mind whether the USO was behind it or not in those days. I suspect that they were. I do remember getting my gift bag at Christmas from the USO. In fact I still have the bag.

But the Club, I mean it was open-air but you could go watch movies and have a couple of drinks and then head on back to your hooch and get ready for either a hot pad or a flight the next morning.

ALLISON: It was pretty much every day. I mean there was no like . . .

NYLAND: It was pretty much routine. There wasn't really, I mean other than Chapel services on Sunday there wasn't much difference between that and any other day except on

Sunday we used to take our malaria pill, a big horse choker. You'd take one a week. And we used to take them on Sunday.

ALLISON: This was sort of as the war was starting to wind down.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: Did that have an effect on morale as people look at getting out of there and whatnot?

NYLAND: No, shortly after I got there we knew that the Marines were going to come out of Chu Lai but we also knew that a bunch of us were going to go to Da Nang and turn over Chu Lai to Americal, so as I said, I think we did that in the September, October timeframe. Then we moved up to Da Nang in 115 with the squadron that went to Da Nang and then 122 and 314 came home and actually when we came home even [VMFA-]334 from Iwakuni met us in Guam and all of us went from there.

The guys used to have these little "short timer" calendars. It was like a helmet with these little shoes on the bottom so you could barely see the short timer calendar. And I think there was another one that looked like a turtle or something. But as we started coming out I think everybody looked forward to either going home, like I did, or those that came out and went to Iwakuni to finish their WestPac tour. But I don't think there was any real problem with morale. The only time that I started to see an issue with morale was when we went through a RIF, a reduction in force while I was in Da Nang; about maybe a month or two months before we came out of there, and where one day a guy was a captain and the next day he was a master sergeant.

ALLISON: Wow!

NYLAND: And when you stayed in the same squadron that's pretty hard. I think that was a lesson learned for the Marine Corps. That's not the kind of thing that we want to have to go through again but if we did I believe now we would do it much differently because that was pretty hard to turn somebody right around and keep them in the same squadron.

ALLISON: Well this would have been someone who had been promoted up into the officer ranks?

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: Some of the NFOs [naval flight officers] were prior enlisted, weren't they?

NYLAND: Yes, several of them had been enlisted. Some had gone from enlisted to warrant officer to officer. Some I think had gone from enlisted to officer as LDOs [limited duty officers] and that's how they were able to be reverted. They knew that when they signed on the dotted line to do that, that that was a possibility.

ALLISON: I see.

NYLAND: But I remember in particular one captain that we had working in maintenance and then the next day turned around and he was a master sergeant, which is pretty hard.

ALLISON: I could see how that would hurt him. What about the troops, any problems--that was a hard time.

NYLAND: We didn't experience many problems in-country. You know when we got home that was kind of a troubled time. I remember as a lieutenant in Yuma those were kind of troubled times. You know we had a lot of the racial type incidents and trying to put programs together to deal with that and we had a lot of folks that actually had been promoted too quickly and probably weren't really ready for the responsibility that they needed to be stepping up to. But while I was in Vietnam I just don't remember encountering any kind of problems with the Marines.

ALLISON: Alright, no safety issues or anything like that?

NYLAND: No, they were pretty terrific. I mean they worked hard and they kept those jets moving and ordnance and fuel, so I don't recall any serious disciplinary kind of issues. We had one suicide the whole time I was there; a young Marine who got a "Dear John" letter and he went in flight equipment where we kept our pistols and he just pulled out a pistol and took his life, but not much otherwise that I can recall. Of course now I wasn't in a position to either observe or administer any office hours but I just don't recall that as being [a problem]. If I had to guess the biggest issue we would have had, and again I didn't see it, but probably was on those days when we had a down day and guys might have had too much to drink and got a little rowdy and had to be straightened out the next day. That would probably be, I would think, the most common thing.

ALLISON: Right. Manfred Rietsch was in 314.

NYLAND: "Fokker." [call sign]

ALLISON: Yes, Fokker. Was he in there when you got there?

NYLAND: No, Fokker had already left and came back to [VMFA-] 531 at El Toro when I got there. In fact I guess we probably crossed on the high seas because I had not met him when I first got there. Of course everybody still knew him. You know he'd been there for 18 months.

ALLISON: Right, he extended for two tours.

NYLAND: He flew 600 missions. That was with "K-9" [Dick Kindsfater] with 600 missions. I think Fokker had 450 plus. But anyway Manfred was not there when I was there. I have run into a guy that I flew with there that I'd gone through training on the West Coast with- Larry Culver. He's retired and lives in Oklahoma City. I was out there doing a birthday ball last year.

ALLISON: Was John Trotti in there?

NYLAND: You know Trotti was there just ahead of me. I know John and I've read his book.

ALLISON: What do think of his book [Phantom Over Vietnam, 1997]?

NYLAND: I thought it was fairly entertaining. I didn't think it was completely accurate in some places, you know aircraft systems and so forth, but otherwise I thought it was a pretty good book and it's been a long, long time ago that I read it.

ALLISON: Yes, but it struck you as accurate?

NYLAND: I thought it was relatively accurate as I recall. The only thing I remember was there were a couple of things about the way the airplane worked that I thought I took exception with. He was not there.

ALLISON: Was there a difference between 314 and 115? As you go from one squadron to another did you conceive, "Well this is a better squadron than that one" or different in any way?

NYLAND: Well, all the F-4 guys thought we were pretty good and we used to tease the A-4 squadrons. I mean they had the Tomcats [VMA-311] and they'd call up and they'd come back off a hop and they'd go, "Two Tomcats to the Cat House", and if we were out there taxiing around one of us would key the mike and say, "Two kitties to the litterbox" [chuckle]. I mean that rivalry between the A-4 and F-4 [communities], you know that good natured spirit was always there.

But by the time I got to 115 there were a great many guys that had come out of 314 and/or I had already known in 115 there in Chu Lai because we were all in pretty close quarters down there.

ALLISON: Sure.

NYLAND: And we had 115, 122 and 314 so I knew them one way or the other and if they hadn't been in the squadron with me before many of them I knew before when they came through [VMFAT-] 101 or [VMFA-] 531 refreshing. You know they had been students along with me and had just gone to a different squadron. So there wasn't any difficult transition going between the two squadrons. And when I got back off of Monkey Mountain I went right to 115 and became the MARES/FORSTAT [Marine Corps Automated Readiness Evaluation System/Forces Statics] officer.

ALLISON: What is that?

NYLAND: We have MARES still, that's reportable ground equipment, and FORSTAT is the precursor of today's SORTS. So I was the readiness guy basically but in those days the squadron's owned all their yellow gear and everything too so those are MARES reportable items and we had to keep track of the SATS [short airfield for tactical support] loaders and the starting units and carts of this kind and that kind.

ALLISON: So you're still sort of working in logistics?

NYLAND: And we had the rolling stock, like jeeps and one and a half ton, not real big stuff but we had some vehicles. But we had a change when we moved to Da Nang. Of course the quarters changed because there we were in Southeast Asia huts and they just had plywood up to about chest height and they had barrels full of sand outside of them whereas we had sandbagged Quonset huts in Chu Lai. You always kept your flak jacket and your helmet right there by your rack because if you starting hearing rockets coming in you just rolled into it and got under the rack.

ALLISON: That's what you did in Chu Lai?

NYLAND: Both places. In Chu Lai, as a matter of fact, we used to sometimes go and they'd get a new guy and he'd be in the rack and we'd come back either from the club or not from the club and we'd get a bunch of broomsticks and you'd run across the top of those Quonset huts, that corrugated [chuckle] . . . and start yelling "Rockets!" and see him come out and stumble out and try to get in his ditch or whatever.

ALLISON: So that's where the ditch was, right outside the hooch?

NYLAND: Yes, you had places spread around out there where you could go jump in a bunker. But up in Da Nang it was funny because you were subject to the elements. In fact I'll never forget in the middle of the monsoon season when it's just damp and cool all the time – you feel cold and it's only 70 degrees – I had an electric blanket that I left on high to keep the sheets dry and then when I'd get there at night I'd put it on low and then I'd sleep with the fan on to keep the bugs off and that's the way it kept the sheets dry. And I had a light bulb in a box where I kept my undershirts and underwear so they wouldn't get damp. The monsoon, I mean it was damp and cold all the time.

ALLISON: It must have been really miserable out in the field for the troops.

NYLAND: Yes, I think about what the Marines that were out there in the boonies, it had to be just awful because I mean we'd be wearing flight jackets and it would be 70 degrees yet you'd swear you were cold.

ALLISON: As you're going through this combat experience and all, were you picking up sort of good examples of leadership or maybe not? Could you give some examples?

NYLAND: I think at that point in my career I probably was picking up more in aviation leadership than I was from a standpoint of just good Marine Corps leadership. Because I had so few hours in the airplane I think that my focus was more on those guys who gave a really good briefing. There was no doubt in your mind what the mission was going to be, what you ultimately would do, how you would alter if the conditions changed or if the FAC wanted to. I thought I had picked up a lot there on that aviation leadership. Not as much opportunity I guess on just straight leadership although certainly when we did security at night in Chu Lai and then when I was a ground defense platoon commander I had an opportunity to focus on that more. I mean we had some tremendous, when I was doing the ground stuff, some tremendous warrant officers that really, really helped me a lot, [they] had been enlisted, became warrant officers and were controllers who really, really helped me with my education along with some great sergeants and staff sergeants.

I think when I was flying airplanes, because we had such limited experience when we got there, you kind of knew what you wanted to hear at a brief after you went with a good one and then you went with somebody who just wanted to kick the tires and light the fires.

ALLISON: You didn't really respect that.

NYLAND: I didn't like that as much. You know anybody could say that. That was catchy and clever but it didn't go a long way towards instilling that, "You get hit, I get hit, this is how we'll do it if the FAC wants this." I mean there's a time to be a little more professional about it and I think I started to appreciate that. I mean the other was always nice to hear and toss around at happy hour but when you got ready to really go do it you knew which ones you wanted to be your flight leaders or which ones you wanted to get in the airplane with.

ALLISON: Right.

NYLAND: But a lot of good training when I was a ground defense platoon commander. You know we used to run patrols up and down the sides of Monkey Mountain. The most fearsome thing we ever rounded up was woodcutters burning wood trying to make charcoal [chuckle].

ALLISON: No combat.

NYLAND: No. You know we got attacked by rock apes occasionally at night but I never saw any Viet Cong, never had to exchange fire with any that I thought were North Vietnamese or anything.

ALLISON: Of course you'd been through TBS. Some aviators hadn't been through TBS.

NYLAND: Well when I went through everybody went through. I mean all regular officers went. Reserve officers could go from college straight to flight school. But, yes, I'd been. But I thought that was valuable training and particularly when I ended up having to do ground security at night in Chu Lai and then having to be the ground defense platoon commander. I was glad that I'd been to Basic School and had some understanding of fields of fire and taking care of weapons and that kind of thing.

ALLISON: Right. Was there anything else on Vietnam that comes to mind? I'm sure there's a tremendous amount.

NYLAND: Well I just look back on it and I think it was just an incredible opportunity for a young officer to go and participate and learn. You know over time I think you remember mostly the good things. Although I'll never forget; that first SAM. I'll never forget pulling out in the clouds one time and seeing nothing but marble in front of us and wondering if we were going to make it, you know, feeling the blowers plug in and wallowing out, and we had rolled in because the FAC needed us but we didn't know we were rolling into a dead end.

ALLISON: To a mountain.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: Wow!

NYLAND: So some of those stick with you but I think back about the great Marines that worked on the jets and the great guys flying them.

And fortunately I got to transpac twice out of Vietnam; once with 314 and once with 115 when we brought them home. I received a lot of good learning from the air control business, which I didn't especially appreciate at the time. I came to appreciate it a lot, really appreciated it later as a wing commander for sure.

ALLISON: That would be extremely beneficial to learn that.

NYLAND: Well you know the truth is the thing that makes our wings unique is not our airplanes, it's our air command and control that plugs us into the joint world and it's our Marine wing support groups who build our little city to operate from.

I think I had appreciation for that earlier than many aviators because of that assignment.

ALLISON: It's that interface between air and ground that makes the air/ground team.

NYLAND: Yes, so it was a great tour. I learned a lot. I learned even more when I came back, but it was great.

ALLISON: Did you transpac back? You brought 115's jets back.

NYLAND: 115's flag went to Iwakuni and six of the jets had been identified by NARF [Naval Air Rework Facility] North Island as coming home to become F-4Ns and since I had the right RTD - return tour date, I got to fly an airplane back. And again, we transpac'd and this time flew them all the way to the West Coast and turned them in, and went and got my orders. I thought I was going to El Toro and then about three days before the movers were going to show up I got a telegram telling me I was going to Yuma to be an instructor because they were short of RIOs.

ALLISON: At 101?

NYLAND: At 101.

ALLISON: Must have been great to get back home though. Of course you'd been to Hawaii.

NYLAND: Yes, I'd been to Hawaii and I guess what I would say about that is I'm certainly glad to see that the American public is welcoming home our young men and women today as

they deserve from Iraq. I guess they weren't exactly welcoming us back with open arms when we came home from Vietnam.

ALLISON: Did you have any bad experiences?

NYLAND: You know trying to dodge people and things like that. I mean there were just a lot of bitter people that just as soon take it out on you when in fact you were just doing what you'd been ordered to do. But I don't see that now with the young folks coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan and it makes me feel very good for them. I think that's the appropriate thing. Whether you agree with whether we should have been in Vietnam or whether we should be in Iraq is immaterial. The young men and women that go forward wearing the uniforms of this nation are going because they've been told to go and they go and they do a great job. They ought to be welcomed home appropriately as far as I'm concerned.

ALLISON: So what did you mean by dodging people?

NYLAND: Well you know they'd be demonstrating in the airports and if they saw guys in uniform they'd want to throw stuff on you.

ALLISON: This was probably real bad out there in California it seems to me.

NYLAND: Yes, parts of it out there. You know fortunately I flew into a military base in my F-4 [laughter].

ALLISON: Yes, right.

Well if you look back on your career Sir, how do you think Vietnam affected you?

NYLAND: Well I guess I feel like I learned a lot, was exposed to a lot there and I think it was an experience that never left me. I mean all the training that you do really is for a purpose and if you ever take it lightly and think that you may not one day be called upon to use it, all you have to do is find yourself in combat and then all of a sudden all those things that people were trying to tell you that were important, you always should pay a little closer attention too. And I knew I was going to combat so I think I paid pretty close attention. But clearly when you go through a long period of peace and don't see an opportunity necessarily, I would hope that everybody always takes it as serious as it could be tomorrow because it could be.

ALLISON: Right.

NYLAND: So I guess that and just the great people that I was over there with, I mean is something that will always be a part of me and always be both in my head and in my heart. It was a great opportunity for a young whippersnapper.

ALLISON: Do you think you had adequate training to go over there?

NYLAND: No, we didn't have a program like we have today. I mean we did okay but it was nothing compared to what we give our young men and women today. And we did the best that we could. You know we dropped a lot of bombs in anticipation of getting ready over there. We were just getting into air-to-air. We ran a few VIDs [visual identification] and did a little basic aircraft maneuvering. But the rigor of the syllabus and the training that our young people get now - even when I came back from Vietnam and 101 had really gotten on its feet and started to do these things – is far superior to what we got before we went over. Not that anybody did it with malfeasance. That was just the best we had. The best we had was, if you had a jet up you put two new guys in it and they went out and dropped bombs or went out and ran intercepts in the [W] 291 [a training range near Yuma] and tried to get some time and get familiar with the airplane, and then when your number came up you were on your way.

ALLISON: Right, it just wasn't very focused.

NYLAND: I mean you look now at the number of simulator hops you have before you go fly, the rigor that's in flying with an instructor pilot or an instructor RIO, we didn't have that same kind of rigor at that point. 101 was a relatively brand new squadron. I think it had only been in existence five or six months when I checked in. I was there for three months and only flew two hops because we didn't have the availability.

ALLISON: Right.

NYLAND: Then I went to 531 – it was something they called the COSA [?] pool. If they had a good jet that jet stayed up for a week in a row and pretty likely was on its way, so maintenance was always working to get jets up. But the rigor of the training was something I think that everybody recognized we needed and that was one of the outgrowths of looking back on the training we received as we went over, and "We can do this a lot better." We do it a lot better now. So I think that was probably one of the things that I learned and one of the things that the Marine Corps has done very, very well is advance that training curricula, the doctrine of procedures and everything that goes with it over the years. We have MAWTUPac [Marine Aviation Weapons Training Unit Pacific] and MAWTULant [Marine Aviation

Weapons Training Unit Atlantic] which ultimately merged to become MAWTS and they gave great courses in basic conventional weapons delivery, you know advanced conventional weapons delivery and the early air-to-air with VIDs but there wasn't the same kind of, you know, "Get in the airplane, brief, debrief with the pilot instructor, RIO, here's your brief, this is where you were good, this is where you didn't do so good." Yet by the time I came back to 101 as an instructor they'd already started down that road.

I mean I had to fly through an IUT [instructor under training] syllabus. I got graded on all of them and it was more rigorous. When we had it before we obviously were trained to some extent, but the rigor and making sure of where you were in that was much improved after Vietnam and continues to improve. I don't think anybody does it any better than we do now.

ALLISON: Right. I talk to aviators now that say that their training was much more demanding than what they went through in Afghanistan or Iraq.

NYLAND: Yes, and that's a good thing I think. If you can look back and say, "I didn't have to do anything in combat that I wasn't ready to do," I think that's a great comment on our training.

ALLISON: It sure is.

Okay Sir, thank you.

END OF SESSION II

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General William L. "Spider" Nyland, USMC
Date: 29 August 2005
Location: General Nyland's Pentagon Office
Interviewer: Dr. Fred Allison
Historian, Marine Corps History Division

SESSION III:

ALLISON: This is the third session of an interview with General William **NYLAND** and this is Fred **ALLISON**. Today is 29 August, 2005 and we're again at the Pentagon in his office.

Sir, to start - we had talked about Vietnam last time – your next duty was at [VMFAT-] 101. I'd like to ask why did you decide to stay in the Marine Corps; hadn't you served your major commitment at that point?

NYLAND: Yes, actually when I first came back from WestPac [Western Pacific] I thought I was going to be assigned to 3d MAW [Marine Aircraft Wing] [Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS)] El Toro and I was home on leave and I got a telegram and it said, "Your orders to El Toro are cancelled. Proceed to [MCAS] Yuma. They're short RIOs [radar intercept officers] and you're going to be an instructor RIO." And I remember I'll never forget this guy's name. I called the 3d MAW [Marine Aircraft Wing] G-1 [administrative office] at El Toro and I talked to a guy, his name was Major George Pesarus, and I said, "Hey, I'm supposed to be going to El Toro. I'm going to fly F-4Bs/F-4Ns off the West Coast there and maybe even take some additional college courses and things like that," and he said, "Well Yuma is just over the hill". [Laughter]

ALLISON: [Laughter]. Yes, right, it is too!

NYLAND: Just over the hill. It had a two-year junior college and it's in the middle of the desert.

So I went on down there and as luck would have it, you know, great people and it was terrific and I enjoyed being an instructor. I learned probably 100 percent more about the airplane than I ever knew before I went to combat because by then we were starting to do so much better with the instructional syllabus and the kind of things that we taught people, much more compared to what I got when I went through 101 at El Toro. So I started looking around trying to decide whether I was going to stay in or not and there wasn't any real big reason to get out. Sometimes the little things sort of irritate you like, "Gee, how come I got the duty four times this month?" Small things like that, so I looked at two things. I looked at going in the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and I actually went through some interviews up in Phoenix and about the time that I would have advanced to the next step L. Patrick Gray got caught with his hands in the till and that was it. The FBI went into a hiring freeze and so that was out and at the same time I also started looking at going back and getting an advanced degree in Zoology, which had been my undergraduate degree. And I'll never forget, I talked to one of my favorite professors from college; Dr. Koster, and he was an ichthyologist/limnologist, which is fresh water fish and fresh water insects, and I said, "I'm thinking about maybe coming back there or wherever and getting an advanced degree," and he told me, he said, "You know," he said, "that would be fine. You would do well," he said, "But the way things look now you're not ever going to make a lot of money at that and there are going to be a lot of decisions if you start to move along in that world other than academics that potentially will frustrate you because there's not a lot of conservation and environmental dialogue at present." That was the early days for all of that kind of thing. And then he said, "If you enjoy at all what you're doing, you ought to sit down and think hard about whether or not you really want to stop doing it." He said, "You know, other than these little things like 'Why did I get the duty four times' or any of the other small points, he said, "You're going to find small irritants in no matter what you do but if you truly enjoy the people and what you're doing, keep doing it." and I said, "Well I do enjoy the people and I do enjoy what I'm doing." So I just cut out all that stuff and waited a little while and got orders to Amphibious Warfare School and never looked back. And so it turned out to be fortuitous; a right decision for me clearly.

ALLISON: Obviously.

NYLAND: And I guess the same decision I made then I'd make today because I love the people and I love what we stand for and what we do for the American public, and so it was very good. It was a great tour down there. I was there four summers, three and a half years.

ALLISON: Down at 101?

NYLAND: Yes, 101. I was there when we merged with [VMFAT-] 201 from the East Coast. I was there when we flew the last of the F-4Bs and "Ns" and then had only "Js" onboard.

ALLISON: It wasn't necessarily a step up as far as radars go, was it, from the "N" to the "J"?

NYLAND: Not in my mind. I was an APQ-72, F-4B/F-4N guy. I had a lot more time in that than I ever had in the "J" model. In fact we used to always, you know it (F-4J) was supposed to be pulse radar and pulse doppler as you recall. A favorite saying about the F-4J, for those of us that grew up in the F-4B, was, "Look down, shoot down, always down."

ALLISON: [Laughter].

NYLAND: So I flew a few hops in the "J" model there, not a whole lot. I did all of my missile shoots and things like that flying F-4Bs and just really, really a great radar. I just always loved it and I used to run around in map mode with that 2.8 degree beam width, and it was just a sweet system.

ALLISON: Right.

This is sort of a time when, right after Vietnam, when the Marine Corps is really into the doldrums. That was sort of a bottoming out time. Could you see things happening that would turn things around coming out of Vietnam and going in this new way?

NYLAND: Yes, there were a couple of things. When I came back from Vietnam we still were very large and we still had an awful lot of NCOs [non-commissioned officers] and staff NCOs that probably got promoted before they should have been promoted, and we had a lot of problems still yet with race relations and all of those kinds of problems that were prevalent in the late '60s/early '70s but we started to see some changes in that. I mean obviously when General Lou Wilson became the Commandant and he said, "I don't care how small the Marine Corps is, if they're not willing to live up to the kind of standards it takes to be a Marine then start moving them out." It was interesting.

The first job I had when I came back from Vietnam, I was the assistant to the assistant legal officer at 101. And we ran an awful lot of investigations and I mean they ran the gamut from theft to destroying stuff in the barracks. We even had guys tinkering with the ejection seats on the airplanes and so then we'd paint the ejection seats with this purple dye that would come off on their hands and then if they got passed under a light you'd see that they'd been out there doing it. So there was an element that just really wasn't in tune with what the basic quorum of the Marine Corps was all about but it started to turn around there and it started to turn around inside aviation too.

I can remember the first maintenance officer we had, that was Jeff Howell, "Beak".

ALLISON: In 101?

NYLAND: In 101. He replaced Major "Rattler" McGann and he was there and he undertook, in those days, what was called the IWSR - integrated weapon system review - the first time I think I'd ever even heard of one - and he basically took every one of those airplanes and took them apart and put them back together to include and particularly focus on the avionics and the weapon systems. And after we were done each one of those airplanes that went through that, we took them up, we shot missiles off of them, we dropped bombs off of them, all the stations worked and you could see that there was a clear intent to start to make sure that the readiness that we wanted to have extended beyond just being able to take off and land the airplane but that in fact it was a full mission capable airplane and you coupled that with the advances that we made in the training systems for the new guys. I remember when I was in 101 [as a student] and it was at El Toro and we'd get a couple of lectures in the ready room and some of the old RIOs – and there weren't any really old RIOs because the F-4 was still new enough – and they'd come in and tell a couple of stories about the nav computer and some other system and we'd be on our way.

ALLISON: That was the training?

NYLAND: That was it, and in 101 we started to actually have lesson plans and objectives and people were assigned to lectures and they had to give their lectures to a murder board. And so we really started to foster much more of an attitude of professionalism, I think is the word, that as always to me means doing it the right way the first time from "A" though "Z." So, I would say you could see that there was this rudder to put the Marine Corps back on the track that we knew that the Marine Corps belonged on—a first to fight professional

organization, ready to go in the airplanes and the systems and everything to support it, and ready to go.

So that was really an interesting time and we really came a long way. I think we flew something like 24 airplanes in a fly-by. I mean we got them all up.

ALLISON: While you were at 101?

NYLAND: Yes, and we did it once again later under a different CO [commanding officer], fewer, I think a 16-plane fly-by, but nonetheless there was every effort made to get these things where they really were up-jets and can accomplish the mission and get things going. It was about that time when we started the early pieces of the move that would merge MAWTULant [Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Unit Atlantic] and MAWTUPac [Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Unit Pacific] and put them together and created MAWTS [Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron] down the road.

ALLISON: A lot more emphasis on professional tactics training.

NYLAND: Well MAWTU Pac and MAWTULant started doing a lot more in those days. That was the start of the timeframe when we actually started getting a few more quotas to Top Gun. We started to put some real teeth and rigor into the air combat tactics instructor course and into the advanced conventional weapons delivery courses and all of those courses started to really take shape and become prominent in our thinking about how we would employ the airplane. So it was MAWTUPac and MAWTULant of course that stayed there and I think they didn't actually really dissolve until the late '70s because the first WTI [Weapons and Tactics Instructor] class was in '77. But the first steps were there in the '73/'74 timeframe and then about '75/'76 was the real transition into MAWTS and then the first class went in the summer of '77 right after I finished Top Gun.

ALLISON: Do you remember anything about the T&R [Training and Readiness] Manual being rewritten? I looked in some of the command chronologies from that time period and it showed that that was going on too out of 101.

NYLAND: And 101 was the model manager for the F-4. So we did that but I would tell you that the T&R Manual really started to evolve in that time as well. I was the schedule writer flight officer so I mean I had that whole T&R Manual up on there on my grease board because that's how we tracked the students progress was on those required sorties, but it just seemed like every opportunity there was there was an effort to really make sure we were

doing the right things. This is when we started to learn how to chain hops and an advanced hop could update certain of the lesser hops and how would this all flow together. When I went through there was no T&R Manual that I recall before I went to Vietnam. So this was when we started to make really great strides with that. Like I said, we had lesson plans. We used simulators to the extent that we had them in those days. It was a positive change.

ALLISON: I wonder where that came from; that concept of sort of standardizing training?

NYLAND: I think a lot of that came out of the association with MAWTUPac and MAWTULant as those guys kind of led the way. I suspect that, not unlike other programs, we may have gotten some ideas from the Air Force.

ALLISON: The Air Force is very standardized.

NYLAND: When we first started that we got that from the Air Force, the Air Guard. They were really the first ones that pioneered that and then we started doing that kind of training but it really was kind of neat and it was rewarding to see how much better it was going to be. And then of course to look at it today it's just like night and day compared to what I went through and to have watched that evolve and to see how full of rigor and how professional we've become with the training piece of it and instilling the right way to do business, it is phenomenal. I look back and, like I said, I think I probably had four or five lectures and the next thing I know I'm in the backseat of the F-4. Hell, I'm still back sitting in the hold short area when that airplane's running down the runway. I was so far behind and it was really great.

ALLISON: That IWSR the Jeff Howell got going, was that his initiative then?

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: And that sort of continued then, didn't it?

NYLAND: Yes, it did. We continued those kinds of things but his was the first time I'd ever seen that done. But there was this clear desire to make sure that the airplanes really were more than just airframes. He was the maintenance officer. Gary Van Gysel was in maintenance. Little Joe "Skoshie," Joe Conlin was down in maintenance and John "Zeus" French, and "Punchy" Schuler, all of these guys that were all captains, all back from Vietnam and pretty darn knowledgeable about the airplane. It just came together and it was a great effort. It was really remarkable.

ALLISON: Do you remember some of your best students? As an instructor of RIO you would fly with the young pilots coming through.

NYLAND: Well it was interesting to watch. I mean a lot of them were really good and some of them who stayed around for a long time like George Tullos was one of my students and then later ended up being my XO [executive officer] in my squadron.

ALLISON: Right and you went to Top Gun with him.

NYLAND: George and I went to Top Gun together. We went to WestPac together when we went out in '75/'76.

ALLISON: In [VMFA-]115?

NYLAND: Right. We had a lot of these guys, you know, Bob Maddocks, Bill Bowden, gee whiz, a lot of guys that came through there.

ALLISON: They were your students then?

NYLAND: Yes, [Dennis] "Denny" T. Krupp. You know I mean I was there pretty early on and I was a first lieutenant. I was an instructor as a first lieutenant for over a year before I made captain.

ALLISON: And you'd already been in Vietnam for a year.

NYLAND: Yes. We used to push them through pretty good.

ALLISON: Today an aviator never shows up until they're a captain. I mean you never hardly see a lieutenant in a squadron.

NYLAND: Well that's right. I mean by the time I was a captain I had already been to Vietnam and back and had been in three squadrons. Four if you count 101 twice. Of course when I went to Vietnam I had 84 hours or 85 hours in the airplane and I didn't know much [laughter], but there I was, and I think these young guys that went to OIF [Operation Iraqi Freedom] and OEF [Operation Enduring Freedom] and Kosovo and places like that, they went through far better training than I ever was.

ALLISON: Very impressive.

NYLAND: Yes, there were a lot of great guys that went through there and there were other guys that were instructors with me that went on, you know like "Bull Moose" Forney and Frank McDuffee.

ALLISON: Is that "Slug" Forney?

NYLAND: No, that's Bull Moose's little brother who was also a RIO. Bill Forney was a pilot in maintenance in 101. Originally he was a tanker in his first tour in Vietnam. He came back, got in the F-4 and then went back again in F-4s. In 115 he was the maintenance officer of 115 and I was the OpsO [operations officer]- Bull Moose, a great American. So I just kept crossing paths with all these guys.

ALLISON: Small community.

NYLAND: It was a small community. I look back and I think, "Man, I was just really fortunate to grow up in the F-4 just because of the people," and I do think maybe a little parochially but the F-4 community did an awful lot of firsts in things like the T&R Manual and then having the ACTI [air combat tactics instructor] program and things that now have become standard throughout Marine aviation, and those were things that all began in the F-4.

ALLISON: Are you saying the T&R Manual was started first in the F-4 community and then it was migrated to the other communities?

NYLAND: I mean that certainly always was my sense that we kind of were the lead. Now you know the A-4s might have been right there alongside or a step behind but it was for sure that the F-4 community led an awful lot of change over the years for Marine aviation and to some extent the Hornet community has continued to do that a little bit too, but it was a remarkable time.

ALLISON: The first CO of MAWTS was an F-4 pilot.

NYLAND: Yes, Howard DeCastro.

ALLISON: In my research I found that this was the time when they said that NFOs [naval flight officers] could assume command. It was along in this time period sometime. Do you remember any issues regarding that and sort of the increasing status of NFOs, or RIOs?

NYLAND: Yes, I think there was a, I guess sort of a, not a tendency, that's probably too strong, but there was a certain air of, I don't know, concern, issue; whatever you want to call it, when the F-4 came along because everybody had been F-8 drivers and they were all single-seat guys and nobody really knew how this two-seat concept was going to work out. Some of them would dive in the front seat, and they'd say, "Get in the back and don't touch anything." Others would say, "This is how we're going to work this together. You do these things and I'll do these things." So there was some interesting growing in the community and while I was at 101 we had an NFO/CO there in between two other COs part of the time;

Lieutenant Colonel John Radich. But the first gun squadron CO was Major Art Bartel who was out on the West Coast and he commanded [VMFA-] 314 and that was the first time that there had been an NFO that ever commanded a squadron and we thought that was a pretty big step because there were some cultural things to overcome as you can imagine.

All these guys came out of F-8s and the next thing you knew you've got somebody in the back, you know as they said, "Either looking over your shoulder or helping," I don't know [chuckle].

ALLISON: I mean it must have been hard too for an NFO to sort of claim a piece of the flying pie--the mission?

NYLAND: Well there was. There was a lot of work. I think that's another thing that kind of helped with the development of the T&R was, "Who is going to do what?" I mean, "Who does the comm? Who does the navigation? Who's going to do what with the weapons system?" Of course as you know you couldn't shoot the missile from the back seat but without the back seat, unless you've got him in bore sight and locked him up in five miles, neither could the front seat shoot the missile.

ALLISON: So there was a real mission for NFOs built into the F-4.

NYLAND: So there was a mission and there was a growing time there to figure out who did what, who kept sight in what areas?

ALLISON: Right.

NYLAND: You know, "What's your role with things as simple as pre-flight or pre-takeoff and pre-landing checklists?" There was a lot of growth and push and pull and sorting it out at that time, and it made for a lot of interesting times and some guys were ready to adjust and others were a little harder to come along.

ALLISON: Some of the old pilots.

NYLAND: Yes. I look back on it and I smile and I guess there were some hard times in some of them but it was great fun too [laughter]. It was just great.

ALLISON: Okay.

Anything else on 101?

NYLAND: No, just a wonderful bunch of people down there; both instructors and students, and we had just a great squadron and tremendous morale. I'll never forget one time, Friday night we all showed up at the [officers] club and finally they gave us a room up there. Well

we could just go in that room so we wouldn't offend or bother anybody else in the rest of the club and they had paper on the walls and you could write on the walls and everything. Then as the story was relayed to me, the group commander called the squadron CO - and I think the group commander was Bob Sinclair and the CO was T.R. Moore - and the conversation went something like, "I wanted to talk to you about the morale in your squadron," and the CO's comeback was, "Yes, it's so damn high I don't know how to turn it off." [laughter], because it had been a good night at the club on Friday night.

ALLISON: Of course Chretins was probably booming.

NYLAND: Oh, Chretins were booming; both of them downtown plus the uptown one, and the nacho eating contests. Then when we'd go to the missile shoots we always did all the missile shoots at Point Mugu and we'd go stay at a place called the Wagon Wheel in Oxnard, California and we'd have the same kind of contests and carried on up there.

ALLISON: That was a motel?

NYLAND: Yes, a big motel up in Oxnard, California. Then we'd get in the vans and drive down in the morning and shoot missiles, get in the vans and drive back up there in the afternoon, and it was just a great time, a great time. I've got just a ton of great memories from down there, getting up and flying the early, early launch before it got too hot and I remember one day going out in the middle of the day and some guy took one of those little, like a meat-roaster thermometer and laid it on the backseat floor and it pegged itself at 150.

I remember, taxiing out at seven o'clock at night with a runway temperature of 135 degrees and I mean you could lose weight like, I mean it would put Dr. Atkins to shame.

ALLISON: [Chuckle] Yes, sweating it off. Course you couldn't turn on the air. I mean the F-4 didn't have an air-conditioner on the ground.

NYLAND: The air-conditioner went down low anyway and you never set the pressurization on the ground because you wanted all the poop to go running down the runway and then once you got airborne and set the pressurization and hope that some cool air would come out, but of course in the back seat, as you recall, those two little eyeballs, they didn't do much. Especially didn't do much below about 10,000 feet [chuckle].

ALLISON: That's right. They sure felt good when they started spitting out little chucks of ice.

NYLAND: Yes, spitting little chunks of ice.

ALLISON: That felt good. I remember the training emphasis being balanced as far as air-to-air and air-to-ground.

NYLAND: Yes, it was pretty well balanced. We took seriously the "F" and the "A." You know we had the basic instruments, formation day and night and then we spent a fair amount of time, I mean I spent an awful lot of time in the bombing pattern and in those days Rakish Litter and Panel Stager [bombing targets] were a stone's throw from Yuma. You'd go out there and you'd make 18 to 25 runs just practicing that pattern work and that was the timeframe when we started to do more with BAM [basic aircraft maneuvering] because we started to have a few guys graduate from Top Gun and ACTI was coming along, but we were pretty balanced. We ran a lot of intercepts. We used to go through all the areas and do intercepts and we actually had a role in the protection of the ADIZ [air defense identification zone] and we used to fly an early, early hop called the "Golf Hotel", which was controlled by "Arizona Pete," which was the radar system headquartered out of Luke Air Force Base. That took care of the ADIZ on the West Coast and so it was pretty balanced although once we started everybody really enjoyed going straight up and straight down and sort of the comeback always was, "Well if you can fly the airplane straight up and straight down you can put it in the right place to drop a bomb." But despite the bravado we did maintain a pretty darn good balance between the air-to-air and the air-to-ground. We didn't do nearly as much at night as we do now as we evolved over the years. We had some night hops in all those areas but not like we do now, I mean certainly not to the extent for instance that the Hornets flew at night in OIF and OEF.

ALLISON: They're very comfortable doing night stuff now-much more than we were.

NYLAND: They are. I mean we didn't have any goggles or anything.

ALLISON: We never got comfortable doing it.

NYLAND: No, it was hard work.

ALLISON: That's right [chuckle]. It was really the exception to go out and do a night hop.

NYLAND: Yes.

So it was great tour. It turned out to be a great opportunity. You know I wasn't excited when I first found out I was going there instead of El Toro. I was really looking forward to being at El Toro and flying out there, flying out in the Whiskey 291 again and all that but when I went down there I probably learned a heck of a lot more about the airplane because I knew I

needed to know it and just met a whole host of the F-4 community, because for three and a half years anybody who flew F-4s or RF-4s came through there, which made for great camaraderie and friendships throughout the Marine Corps, so that was always a plus.

ALLISON: Because these were the future leaders of not only Marine fighter aviation but of the Marine Corps itself.

NYLAND: Aviation altogether, yes.

ALLISON: Like Jeff Howell and . . .

NYLAND: A great bunch of people, yes, Jeff Howell, and "Bull Moose" Forney retired as a one-star, herds and herds of these guys that all became colonels, you know; T.V. Gleason, Frank McDuffee and Gary Van Gysel; a terrific bunch of people.

ALLISON: It sounds like the Marine Corps was kind of re-creating itself there at that time, not re-creating itself but there was . . . .

NYLAND: Well I think it was getting, you know if there had been a little lean out of the traces of honor, courage, commitment and professionalism, we were righting the ship.

ALLISON: Yes.

NYLAND: And it was really quite impressive.

ALLISON: So were you conscious of that?

NYLAND: Oh absolutely. I mean we went through all kinds of programs. I think the first one was the people-to-people program, you know all these designed to get at the issues that were bothering some of the younger Marines in particular in what do we do to re-instill the Corps' ethics into everybody and how do we take care of people, a better job, so we were very conscious of it and I mean all you had to do was draw the duty. And of course you became really conscious of it when you'd go to the mess hall or to the barracks at night and I mean sometimes it was pretty rough. But we knew very well that we were working our way out of that.

ALLISON: It was deliberate.

NYLAND: And it was a good thing.

ALLISON: I wanted to ask, was there any particular type of training that the pilots had more difficulty with, young pilots? I mean what was the hardest thing for those guys? Were you ever really scared by some of those guys?

NYLAND: They got your attention a couple of times. I think the thing that most of them had the hardest time with was air refueling. And once you could get them to just get still behind that basket and stop looking at it and listen to your calls, because the RIO could see the probe and see the basket and you could get pretty darn good at that. But I had a couple of them make a couple of charges at the basket and had that thing whack my canopy and put a crack in it, and that always was a way to gain your attention. And I had guys try to take off with the flaps still up. But I guess that was one of the harder things for them was that in-flight refueling.

ALLISON: Yes. Okay- then you went to AWS [Amphibious Warfare School] out of there.

NYLAND: Yes, I rolled out of there and went to AWS. I was in the second nine-month class at AWS. It was interesting. A friend of mine; Ted – and I can't think of his last name right now. He still lives in Yuma as a matter of fact – he went to the first nine-month class and he actually got back before I left and I remember him telling me, you know he said, "They've taken six months and crammed it into nine," he said, "So we had every Wednesday afternoon off. We didn't work any weekends so you ought to really enjoy it." So I remember coming to D.C. and I go to Quantico and the first thing I did was I drove right to the golf course and I bought myself a membership and then I checked in only to find out that there had been a group of guys that had gone to the director and told him they hadn't been stressed hard enough, and they hadn't been tested. So as soon as we walked in there on day one there were no Wednesdays off and we worked some Saturdays and all of this golf membership that I had in mind was kind of out the window. But it was a good year. I met a lot of great people. Again, a lot of great people in my class and in fact a couple of us went on and Dave Mize and I sat next to each other and he and I were then later selected for brigadier general on the same board.

And we had Paul Hayes, another great friend of mine and we ended up in 115 together after AWS and now he's retired down in Pensacola and we've been in touch all these years. It was a great experience. I really enjoyed AWS and did pretty well there. You know I finished number two in the class.

ALLISON: Did you?

NYLAND: Dick Cooke who later retired as a major general was the head of AWS and it was good.

ALLISON: Did you have any trouble sort of reintegrating with the grunts, ground officers?

NYLAND: I didn't. I mean I kind of figured if I was going to be there I was going to do as well as I could and show them I could learn this just as well as they could, and that actually turned out to be a pretty good deal for me because after that I determined that anytime there was an opportunity to go to one of these schools in residence I would do that because of the interaction and plus the ability to --all of those schools were sort of stair steps. You know AWS was company and a little bit of discussion on battalions and Command and Staff, move that up the line a little bit and so I always figured there was great value in going to the course. For me I liked going in residence because of the people that you would meet that would last across your life in the Marine Corps and plus I think that's where I really first started to get the idea about the MAGTF [Marine air-ground task force] officer and understanding. You need to understand how it all works together; how it all comes together.

ALLISON: Sort of the big picture of Marine Corps doctrine.

NYLAND: And we didn't do that much, as much as MAGTF did in those days. Obviously we did some but it was a start and so it always seemed important to me to get the professional military education that you could get for both reasons. One, for the understanding, and two, for the people that you would get to meet and spend time with. So that was a good nine months. I enjoyed it. The nice thing about it too, by being out of the airplane only nine months, I ran right back down to Yuma and got refreshed. I didn't even have to redo a whole lot of things and launched off to WestPac.

ALLISON: So this is sort of part of being at 101, I mean it's a just a temporary thing out to AWS?

NYLAND: Yes. So yes, it worked out great for me.

ALLISON: Did you ever hear any talk of like, "Why do we need fighters in the Marine Corps?" or anything like that? I saw an article in the Marine Corps Gazette where that was batted back and forth. Was there any of that being talked about?

NYLAND: I don't ever remember it being directed internal. I think I recall more frequently the question was asked externally, "Why does the Marine Corps need aviation?

ALLISON: Is that right?

NYLAND: Yes. I don't recall that much of any disparity or questioning internal to the Marine Corps why we would have them and I think the more theme common was, "Why

does the Marine Corps have aviation? Why do we need four Air Forces?" I mean that's kind of been the theme that's been out there for a lot of years but I think the answer is over time we've come to rely on it to the extent that we've reduced our artillery because this is the way we provide that in part but also because of the flexibility. And I would tell you that over time instead of becoming simply a supporting arm you've seen it to where it can be the maneuver element, witness 3d MAW and what they did with their right flank for their division and the MEF went north in Iraq. So I think our thinking and our use has evolved over time and it's really been pretty significant. I mean you know when I first was flying and was clever enough to know there were these issues out there; I mean it was all about being-- I mean aviation was strictly in a supporting role.

ALLISON: Is that right?

NYLAND: And you know, just here to support the MAGTF, here to support the ground scheme of maneuver, and it wasn't all that long ago when we started thinking about, "What a minute. Why can't the Wing at some point be the maneuver element?" or "Why can't they both be?" We have seen these changes come along. So it's been kind of a pretty neat evolution watching it all take place.

ALLISON: I'd like to really get into that at some point but when did you start picking that up?

NYLAND: I think we really started getting into that probably about the time I was a colonel/lieutenant colonel when we started talking about . . .

ALLISON: Early '80s?

NYLAND: Yes, mid to late '80s probably.

ALLISON: Before the Gulf war?

NYLAND: Yes, talking about the ACE [air combat element] as maneuver elements. A lot of that came along with the MSTP [MAGTF Staff Training Program], in particular in the early '90s when we started getting the MAGTF Staff Training Program and talking about, "How do we plan and how do we look at the maneuver elements?" and "Is it strictly a supporting arm?" I think that's when it really started to accelerate that aviation could be more than just there in support.

ALLISON: I wonder if that was a real battle here at the high levels between . . . ?

NYLAND: I'm assuming that it was not because the MSTP was sanctioned from the highest level to get us back into warfighting and to get the MEF [Marine expeditionary force] and the MSC staffs into warfighting, so I'm going to assume that there were some enlightened folks up here that were saying, "Ask these questions, talk about it. Maybe there are better ways to do things. It doesn't always have to be the way it always was." And so I think it definitely has evolved and it's been quite good.

ALLISON: So the Marine Corps' just not slaves to doctrine.

NYLAND: Well I don't think so. I think slave to doctrine is not right and then neither is slave to the old way.

ALLISON: Yes.

NYLAND: I mean I think you remember when we were in [VMFA-] 212 and I was pushing centerline-only transpacs [trans-Pacific flights]. Now we had some dinosaurs who said, "No, you have to always have three tanks because that's the way we've always done it." Finally we got somebody to sit down and look at the charts and what we had calculated and figured, and what do you know, now we started making centerline-only transpacs. So I mean there's always resistance to change but you just can't give up. If you think you've got a better idea you've got to go keep trying. And you were in the squadron when Colonel Bright came through and I had been trying to do those centerline-only transpacs and still hadn't made any breakthroughs and he had the two trashcans taped together, painted white like a centerline tank, and he brought that to the Club and presented it to me.

ALLISON: [Chuckle] I don't think I was in there at that time. Colonel Bright, who was he?

NYLAND: Ray Bright; he used to be the transpac movement control officer.

ALLISON: Oh, okay, I don't remember that.

NYLAND: He was probably still there when we made the first WestPac pump in 212 before you all joined us for my second one.

ALLISON: Right, that must have been the one in '78 that you made.

NYLAND: Yes, but by the time I was the CO of [VMFA-] 232 we were making centerline only TransPacs to WestPac.

ALLISON: You just have to refuel more.

NYLAND: Well you do refuel a little bit more but you're also cleaner so you burn less and you also have a better single-engine capability if you loose a motor partway out there.

ALLISON: That was your thinking?

NYLAND: Yes, there were a lot of things that made a difference. I mean I can take a look at the transpacs. The transpacs have changed so much. I mean now of course you're just escorted by a KC-10 or a [KC-] 135 all the way but the first time I transpac'd and we took jets from Hawaii to California when we brought them out of Vietnam, we refueled once. We met those guys some 800 miles out there and refueled – we were wearing three tanks – and then we went on our way and there was an emergency tanker on the other end in case you got close and were low on gas. We never thought about single-engine performance. We never thought about having bingo fuel to go back. I mean this was like the Wild, Wild West making those transpacs. I mean we were out there, we've got four jets and eight 1st lieutenants and then by the time I went back to Hawaii the next time we were smarter. We'd travel with the 130s or we'd have an A-3 as a pathfinder but we did understand what it would mean to have a bingo fuel and where would you go and we'd start refueling two/three/four times, so I mean all these things you learn as you go. I mean we were pretty dumb at some points early on. We got better but I mean I've watched those things change so much it's just unbelievable. You know eight lieutenants, four jets, no TacAN [tactical air navigation – a navigation instrument in aircraft] out there, on an analog nav computer—it was like, "what do you think?"

ALLISON: Between California and Hawaii.

NYLAND: Well there and also I mean we made the run from, you know we came out of Vietnam and it wasn't too bad going into Cubi. I think that was about an 800 mile/850 mile leg but then flying the F-4Bs we went from Cubi Point to Guam unrefueled.

ALLISON: Wow!

NYLAND: And we were in these hogs, you know I mean we'd start them out at 28 [000 feet]. We'd take them to 32/36 [000 feet], and we're just up there gliding along and planning on an idle decent into Guam and we're out there in the middle, and it's just all of us lieutenants doing the best we could do and when the winds were too heavy, that time we took them from Cubi Point up to Kadena because Kadena to Guam was only a little over 1,200 miles instead of almost 1,400 the other way and there we'd go, unrefueled, driving these jets down there. And then the rest of the legs were pretty easy from Guam to Wake and Wake to Midway and Midway into Hawaii, and then of course the big leg over the pond from Hawaii.

I mean you went out there and you used to have to talk to Ocean Station November, which was a ship in the middle of the damn ocean. We couldn't talk to anybody. We didn't have anybody out there with us. We were just drilling along oblivious to the fact that this could be dangerous [laughter].

ALLISON: Was this a ship that was always out there?

NYLAND: Yes, it was sort of a reporting point that the ships and airplanes used out there.

ALLISON: Just because there wasn't an island around there?

NYLAND: Yes, it was pretty amazing.

ALLISON: Was anybody ever lost or anything?

NYLAND: Yes, I imagine there were. I mean we almost lost a squadron; a bunch of A-4s one time when they were getting low on fuel and they were found by one of the radars in Hawaii and they were like 160/170 miles north of the island. If they'd have kept going they'd all run out of gas and gone in the drink, but we got better though, like I said. Then we started having an A-3 go with us who could do it or we'd get the C-9 and we'd leapfrog the C-9 because it couldn't keep up with us.

ALLISON: That's amazing.

NYLAND: It was amazing how it all evolved.

ALLISON: No wonder you religiously worked that nav computer.

NYLAND: Man I loved that nav computer [laughter]. I'll tell you what, I can remember in 115 coming home all the way from Cubi Point to Iwakuni and coming into Iwakuni in IFR [instrument flight rules] weather and did it all on a nav computer.

ALLISON: Is that right? Wow!

So you were in 115 after you came out of 101.

NYLAND: After AWS, yes. I went to AWS and then went to WestPac.

ALLISON: That was on the East Coast.

NYLAND: No, I went to WestPac. 115 was in Iwakuni then. This was pre-UDP [unit deployment program] and we used to go overseas for 13 months.

ALLISON: Kind of like 212 is now.

NYLAND: Right. So we had two F-4 squadrons there. We had 115 and 232 and I worked my bolt to try to get into 115. I actually went back to WestPac early obviously because I'd

only been back from Vietnam at that point, I guess, four and a half years but I did it so I could have orders to Hawaii.

ALLISON: So you take a bad deal for a good deal….

NYLAND: Yes, and actually 115 turned out to be a great deal because I got there and part of the time I was the Assistant OpsO and the rest of the time I was OpsO as a captain of a fighter squadron, and what a great life. And in those days, when I got there we had F-4Bs and one of the Navy squadrons – I want to say VF-72 or 96, one of them anyway – they got rid of their F-4Js and so they brought them into Iwakuni, on pier side, 14 F-4Js all in cocoons and so for the first month I was there we were still flying the "Bs" but we're taking the cocoons off these "Js" and getting them all ready and we've got all these airplanes all over the flight line, and once we got those "Js" then we went to Kadena for two months. We left Kadena and we went to Cubi Point for two months. We left Cubi Point and we went back to Kadena for two months. From Kadena we went on a contingency mission to Misawa for six or eight weeks and from there we went to Korea and from Korea I went back to Iwakuni to catch the "freedom bird" home. So for the 13-month tour I was probably in Iwakuni two months and every six to eight weeks this whole herd of Air Force C-130s would show up, pack up the squadron and move us to the next place. I mean it was unbelievable. It was a great tour and we just went where the weather was good and flew airplanes.

ALLISON: It was pretty wide open sounds like, as far as what you could do and stuff.

NYLAND: Yes, and being the OpsO as a captain of an F-4 squadron, what a treat.

ALLISON: Who was the CO of that squadron?

NYLAND: Initially it was Harvey Bradshaw who went on to be a colonel and commanded [VMFA-] 531 and then retired, and his follow-on was Lieutenant Colonel D.D. Wilson; Don Wilson, and when he left he was replaced by Lieutenant Colonel Dick Glass. And so I was with Harvey Bradshaw for about, I don't know, six or eight weeks and then Don Wilson basically had it most of the time and then Dick Glass had it for probably the last month or so while I was there before I headed out. In those days they came over and commanded for about a year and then left. But it was a great squadron. You know, Mike "Mini" Mott, T.V. Gleason, Joe Stewart, "Bull Moose" Forney, Bob Sodasgrum, Frank McDuffee, Pete Cranker--we had a great outfit and did a lot of wonderful flying.

ALLISON: Do you remember what kind of training you did?

NYLAND: Yes, we did everything, again, across the board, you know, air-to-air, air-to-ground, a lot of missile shoots out of White Beach in Kadena because we were working those "Js" up.

ALLISON: What condition were they in?

NYLAND: They weren't new. They were used but they'd been in cocoons and so they had a lot of avionics and things that, you know after airplanes don't get run for a while you know how they get, just like cars, they'd rather be run and so we had to work a lot of that out and we did a lot of missile work and a lot of air-to-ground work too in Kadena. And then we went to Cubi, and again, down there a lot of air-to-ground work in Wild Horse Creek and in the ranges over there and the islands, plus a fair amount of air-to-air work. In fact I did ACTI in Cubi Point.

ALLISON: You got ACTI?

NYLAND: We had Doc Tyson who was the Group S-3A and he had come from MAWTUPac and brought all the instructional materials and this was the first time that we started doing these certifications other than on the West Coast or on the East Coast. And so he came out there and he was the Group 3. Sam Huey was the Group 3. Doc was the 3-A. He came down to the Philippines and we put, I don't know, four crews I guess or three crews through ACTI.

ALLISON: Had you already been ACTI?

NYLAND: I'd been through part of the syllabus but I'd never had the designation so I actually got it there while I was in 115 in Cubi Point.

ALLISON: Okay. Was "Cajun" [George Tullos] in the squadron then?

NYLAND: "Cajun" was in the squadron.

ALLISON: Were you all crewed up?

NYLAND: I was crewed up with Bill Forney. He was the maintenance officer, I was the OpsO, and he and I used to fly the cripples everywhere we went [chuckle] and you know the last one out, the one that didn't have a TacAN or didn't have a whatever, so we were crewed together and obviously, as always, we were short RIOs so I flew with other guys too; sometimes with "Cajun" and sometimes with T.V. Gleason and George Stewart, all these other guys; Ed Pickerel. But we were crewed up for the most part. "Rugdance"- Dale Clark

was another one. And in fact it was "Rugdance"- Dale Clark and I that went through the ACTI together and it was . . .

ALLISON: That was his call sign; "Rugdance"?

NYLAND: "Rugdance", yes.

ALLISON: There's got to be a good story behind that.

NYLAND: Yes, I don't remember what it was. He got it on the West Coast. I knew him as a student and then he went to the West Coast while I was in AWS and first got to WestPac. But it was great. Yea, it was pretty slick.

ALLISON: So you were in 115 and then you got orders to 212.

NYLAND: Yes, in fact while I was in 115 it looked like for a while that they were going to bring-- they had earmarked myself and "Cajun" to come to 212 and go to Top Gun and so it looked like we were both going to come out early and then at the last minute – I don't know how it really came to pass – but George got about a month cut and went to Hawaii, but did not go to Top Gun. He went instead to a boat period that 212 had and I finished out my tour there and then arrived in Hawaii. Initially I thought I was pretty clever. I'd been around in the Marine Corps now for a while and had been in several squadrons and so I thought, "You know the smart guy checks in on Friday afternoon. Nobody's around. They just give you your assignment and then you're free for the weekend." And I checked in on a Friday afternoon and sure enough the Group XO [executive officer] was around and I go in there and he says, "You're a RIO, right", and I said, "Yes." He said, "You know about radar and ECM [electronic countermeasures]?" I said, "Yes, I know a little bit about it." and he said, "Well good." he said, "Because you're going to be the brigade electronic warfare officer and the brigade FORSTAT [forces statistics] officer because the guy who's in that job, we just got told for the second time your nomination is overdue and you're it." [Chuckle] I thought my life had come to an end.

I said, "You've got to be kidding me!" [chuckle] Then of course where did I go. I went to the Club and talked to all my buds and they said, "Hey, you'll fly with us. You'll fly with both the squadrons and we'll get it sorted out and we still want you to go to Top Gun in the spring class." So I did; I went up there and worked for General Joe Went who was terrific and Colonel Buck Rogers and I did FORSTAT and I did EWO [electronic warfare officer] in I guess about -- whenever I got there. I must have gotten there in the September

timeframe or so of ’76 and in March of ’77 I started flying exclusively with 212 and Cajun and we’re working up and the next thing you know we’re in Miramar going to Top Gun.

ALLISON: And Colonel [Phil] Kruse was the CO at that time?

NYLAND: Yes, Phil Kruse. Initially it was Ron Andrus and then Phil Kruse took over. He had been the XO of 235 and came over and took 212 and George and I went off to Top Gun and at the end of Top Gun George went on to WTI. They brought in Russ Erickson to be his RIO and I came back because I was senior enough that I was going to go into Ops and then ultimately become the OpsO as a captain again. So I missed the chance to go to WTI but we had a great Top Gun and came back to the squadron. About that time Manfred Rietsch joined the squadron from Top Gun. He was the OpsO initially and I was his assistant Ops in there. Then I actually – it’s hard to remember the sequence – but I guess that first tour we took in WestPac when he moved up to be the XO is when I became the OpsO. But what a great outfit 212 was. You know we made two pumps to WestPac and three trips to the mainland for training. [Jefferson D.] Beak Howell of course took over on the second pump in the summertime and actually that was the first pump I guess because Beak was the CO when you got there.

ALLISON: That’s right, in the summer of ’79.

NYLAND: Yes. He’d been CO since the summer of ’78. We went over there in the spring of ’78 and we had the change of command was right there on the flight line. Is that right, or was that the summer of ’77?

ALLISON: I don’t know. I can check it out.

NYLAND: It had to be the summer of ’78 because I came back from Top Gun and George was still at WTI so it had to be the summer of ’78 when Beak took over because we did the change of command on the flight line. The only German [Rietsch] in the world that could not march was the CO of troops, had all the commands written in ink in the palm of his hand and so that had to be the summer of ’78.

ALLISON: Did he have a sword too?

NYLAND: No, thank heavens, he might have hurt himself.

ALLISON: [Chuckle].

NYLAND: But yes, of course that was a great squadron and a great couple of deployments.

ALLISON: It was a great squadron.

NYLAND: Yes it was, a lot of folks that went on to do a lot of good things out of there; a lot of full colonels and several general officers.

ALLISON: Right.

Did it change between when Colonel Kruse had it and when Colonel Howell took it over?

NYLAND: Well "Beak" was his XO.

ALLISON: Oh, okay, so there was continuity there.

NYLAND: So there was a lot of continuity. There was a clear focus at all times to do things the right way. I mean I think that was one of the things that I always thought about 212, I mean we worked very hard on our SOP [standard operating procedures]. We worked very hard on, "How did you become a section leader or division leader or mission commander." Everything was always done with quality and with class I thought and that was one of the things that was consistent for the whole time I was in 212.

ALLISON: With Kruse and then with Colonel Howell too?

NYLAND: With Kruse and with Howell. Yes, Kruse was gone by the time you guys joined. In fact you were there when "Beak" turned over to "Blade" [Tom Conley].

ALLISON: Right.

NYLAND: Conley, and I was there for about a month with "Blade" but I'd known "Blade" in Vietnam because he was in 122 when I was in 314.

But I think that was probably one of the things over all the years that has always stuck with me was just the quality and the caliber of the people in 212 and the way everything was done professionally and with class. You know we never did anything part-way. There were a lot of good lessons learned for me there. You know when you get around to that point where you start to think about you're going to be a commander, what I did was I remember pulling out a little folder and I put a page in there for each shop (S-section) with things I wanted to do but then I had a couple of overall pages of things and an awful lot of what went into the way I wanted to run my squadron were things I had learned and observed in 212.

ALLISON: That's the impression I got, that Colonel Howell was such a leader.

NYLAND: Well he's such a dynamic leader. You know I mean he was terrific and he took care of his Marines yet he wouldn't accept not getting the job done either. You did it right and if you gooned it up you could hear about it and you could hear it very loudly.

ALLISON: Right, I remember.

NYLAND: But I mean he was a great leader.

And the thing that was great about Phil Kruse, Phil Kruse was actually the guy that put the team together.

ALLISON: Oh, is that right?

NYLAND: And he sat there and as he was the XO of 235 and he knew he was going to 212 to take over he watched how the people were split and splayed and who went where, and then when he first got into 212 he did a lot of work maneuvering the people around and he was . . .

.

ALLISON: Getting the people he wanted?

NYLAND: Yes, so he was very instrumental in putting that squadron together and then with his leadership and Beak's leadership. And of course Manfred coming in and being Ops with his background from Top Gun, well everything was similarly very professional, you know briefing, debriefing, you know, "You will be on time otherwise you will not fly;" all those things that seemed sort of little but really mounted up to be such a professional outfit and it was pretty great.

ALLISON: The morale was very high.

NYLAND: Oh yes, that was another outfit with morale that you couldn't turn off.

ALLISON: [Chuckle] Yes.

NYLAND: Of course 115 was like that too. I mean I was in an awful lot of great squadrons and I learned a lot in 115. That's why I think, and maybe the young guys today feel the same way and I hope they do, but I look back and I say, "Man, I'm just so glad I grew up in the F-4." What a community full of great, great individuals and they will always have a special spot in my heart [chuckle].

ALLISON: A lot of great leaders there.

NYLAND: Yes. I remember Bill Forney and one time we were coming out of Cubi Point and we were bringing a cripple and you know how you can bend around in that thing and you can kind of glance at the tele-light panel and looking up there, and I'm back there and we're just north of Laoag and he says, "What's that making noises?" and I looked up there and I said, "Moose, what's that light on the tele-light panel", and he said, "Spider, lean over on the right hand side." and I leaned over on the right hand side and he takes the Stars and Stripes

Forever and he says, “Take this newspaper and read it.” He said. “Don’t be looking over my shoulder. There’s no need for more than one of us to be scared.” [Laughter]

ALLISON: [Laughter].

NYLAND: You know, just moments like that that are forever in your mind and yet flying with guys that could drive that airplane to the edge of the envelope.

ALLISON: No, you never worried about them.

NYLAND: No. I mean everybody knew what they were doing. You knew your role, you know where to be and they knew how to move the jet around and it was really quite good.

ALLISON: A unique place. Do you think it’s like that in the other services; Air Force, the Navy, or does the Marine Corps have a distinct sort of a culture?

NYLAND: I have to think that ours is a little bit different, not only because of who we are but because we’re all Marines first. But I also think our community was much smaller than any of the other services so the fact that, like I was an instructor for three and half years. I knew everybody who flew F-4s no matter which coast they were on and because we were so good in the Marine Corps about moving people back and forth and not homesteading them I think everybody had a pretty good exposure to both coasts, and so I think ours was a little bit unique because we could do that.

ALLISON: And it was smaller.

NYLAND: Smaller; we had MAWTS by then that put us all in the same T&R; the same kind of training and not, “The East Coast does it this way, the West Coast does it that way.” And because we’re smaller there are many advantages that come out of that and I think that’s one of them. You know you get a community that’s like that and the F-4 community certainly was so it was pretty special.

ALLISON: It is unique…..

NYLAND: Yes it is.

END OF SESSION III

PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General William L. "Spider" Nyland, USMC
Date: 11 October 2005
Location: Assistant Commandant's Transition Office located in the Navy Annex
Interviewer: Dr. Fred Allison, Historian, Marine Corps History Division
Dr. Jim Ginther, Gray Research Center

SESSION IV:

ALLISON: This is the fourth session of the interview with General William L. "Spider" Nyland by Fred Allison and today Dr. Jim Ginther is participating in this session; an aviation historian with the Gray Research Center Archives. Jim actually has written a dissertation on General Keith McCutcheon.

NYLAND: Oh great.

ALLISON: And so he's very interested in Marine aviation.

GINTHER: A tremendous officer [McCutcheon]. It's a tragic early loss.

ALLISON: Today's date is the 11th of October, 2005 and we're at the Navy Annex in the Assistant Commandant's transition office.

I'd like to start off just finishing up talking about [VMFA-] 212 sir. You took over as the Safety Department head, didn't you, in 212?

NYLAND: I was both OpsO as a captain and then I was Department Head-- Director of Safety and Standardization as a major.

ALLISON: Was that kind of a new concept-- having safety as a separate department? Could you give some background on that? Was that something peculiar to 212 or MAG-24 [Marine Aircraft Group 24] or was that throughout the Marine Corps at that time?

NYLAND: It was starting to gain footing throughout the Marine Corps at that time. We had started looking at those kinds of concepts. Actually I wasn't part of it but they started to look at that in the Marine Corps because our safety record really was not what it should be. So we had an aviation safety officer and he was a special staff officer and answered directly to the

commander. The concept was to take aviation safety, ground safety and NATOPS [Naval Air Training and Operational Procedures Standardization], which all had to do with standardization, and put them all under one department and make that a special department reporting, as the other departments did, directly to the commander, and in that way hopefully you could get a synergy, and not only that but to also recognize the importance of each of those billets. And probably mostly out of those the ground safety, which had traditionally a lot of times languished over in the S-4 and found other different homes throughout; sometimes down in Maintenance, and to really have a home and a focus by putting all three together in the Department of Safety and Standardization we ended up with a concept that I think has borne out across the years. We worked that some more when I was at Headquarters later but that was the early stages of when we started creating the Director of Safety and Standardization and that was the logic behind it; to get synergy of all of them plus to ensure that they were all aviation, ground and NATOPS elevated so that the commander had knowledge of them and the department head who ran that had direct access. You know the Marine Corps is sort of parochial. There were some who weren't happy that a captain Aviation Safety Officer should have direct access to the commanding officer and didn't have to go through the OpsO or the XO [executive officer] or somebody, so the special staff concept was a little hard, I think, in that area and this made that easier. For instance when I served as the DSS [Director, Safety and Standardization] I was also the Aviation Safety Officer.

ALLISON: Right, I remember that.

NYLAND: And so I had a ground safety officer and I had a NATOPSOfficer.

ALLISON: Yes, [Norman G.] "Dutch" Schlaich was your NATOPSOfficer, wasn't he?

NYLAND: Dutch was NATOPS for a while. I had Greg Ingles in there for a while. I had Steve Erickson, he ended up selling real estate out there in Hawaii, was the Ground Safety, "Swede" Erickson.

So I'd already been OpsO as a captain in [VMFA-] 115. I'd been OpsO at 212 as a captain and I didn't have any shortage of ideas on how Ops worked and more importantly, I think, we needed to show that the Director of Safety and Standardization wasn't in competition with Operations. That was never the intent and so I think my background in that kind of helped me do that and I had a great relationship -- you know George Tullos took over

Ops after me and we all knew our lanes and we didn't infringe on each others' and because we had the relationships we could go back and forth and talk about things that we thought kind of landed in each other's areas or was on the gray area. So I was pretty happy with it. I thought it worked very well. As I recall we never got less than a noteworthy on any IG [Inspector General] inspection or PAC [Fleet Marine Force, Pacific] inspection the whole time I was there. We had some pretty good programs and some innovative ideas, I thought, for the time.

ALLISON: It seemed like 212 at that time was a great squadron. If you look at the people that were in that squadron a lot of them moved up into command positions like yourself and "Beak" [Jefferson D. Howell].

NYLAND: Yes, we turned out an awful lot of really great guys. We turned out just a herd full of people that all became colonels and then several general officers.

ALLISON: Right, taking over squadrons and groups and whatnot. So what about this, I mean, I ran into this later around the Marine Corps – this idea that 212 and the Lancers were "blue bloods?" Did you ever hear that?

NYLAND: I know people always used to look at us. I'm not sure what caused all that to come together. Part of it I think was obviously just luck. Part of it was due to Phil Kruse who was the CO [commanding officer] when that sort of all started. The guy that carried it forward was "Beak" and that was sort of the, if you will, that special period and then [Thomas M.] "Blade" Conley came behind him. But Phil Kruse had a lot to do with who initially came in that squadron and some he even did while he was not in the squadron, which funneled guys in there. How he ended up with that particular mix of people; coming in Hawaii, coming to 212 at that one time, is just one of those unique periods I guess where you just get a bunch of folks that really click and drive each other to do better and feed off each other, and there wasn't anybody in there that was a prima donna. Nobody was afraid to share their knowledge. It wasn't like, "I've got this great move and I can gun you in two turns and I'll never tell you how to do it." It was all about helping the light bulb come on for the young guys and building strong flight leaders. "If you can't be a good wingman you surely can't be a good section leader." It really was sort of a magical kind of time and I've heard people say they never knew how 212 got all those people in one outfit at one time. But remember too, we were the first guys that really went through more than one unit deployment cycle [UDP]

together too. So we were basically frozen for two UDP cycles and we picked up you and "Sunshine" [Dennis Dilucente] and a couple others on the turn around. But in large number the group that went back to WestPac [Western Pacific] the second time was the same group that went the first time.

ALLISON: Yes, so there wasn't a huge turnover at any one time?

NYLAND: Not a large turnover and we all --you know Manfred "Fokker" Rietsch was there and me and George Tullos, "Smoke" [Larry] Staak, so there was a fair amount of stability, which was a first also because here before everybody kind of moved and shuffled and if you were going to WestPac you went unaccompanied and they just pulled you out of one squadron and moved you into one over there and you stayed 13 months and came home. So it was a combination of things but it was just a great outfit. I mean we did a lot of great things, a lot of great training and I think we did it all well.

ALLISON: It was the feeling I got after being there a while, after being harassed for a while you get the feeling that you're really in a great outfit and you had this idea that you really wanted to live up to something there.

NYLAND: Yes. Everybody wanted to contribute. We tried to do it right. It was done very professionally in my opinion and that was, I think, the professionalism was one of the things that I thought was really important and that became sort of my hallmark when I was a squadron commander and group commander. And I use it still today when I go down and speak to the commander's course and I take the word – PROFESSIONALISM, and I put it vertically, and then I put behind each of those letters what you ought to be thinking about; what ought to be going on in your mind and what ought to be going on in your unit, and I think professionalism really characterized the way we operated in 212.

ALLISON: Did you have a hard time balancing, I mean as safety gets more influence in the Marine Corps did that take something away from realistic training?

NYLAND: I think not because I think they go hand in glove and, you know I'm one of these guys that have to talk about safety because you have to maintain that awareness. But I come back to the word professionalism. If you do everything professionally from the moment you start to plan your hop until the moment you sign off the yellow sheet and then do your debrief, safety is going to be a logical by-product. I believe that to my bones and I always have and I always will. And so if in fact you approach everything in a professional manner

the safety will come because you have to get people to think that way and you have to talk about safety as well because clearly it is important. We can't afford to lose either the Marines or the assets when we do dumb things and so I don't see safety hampering training. I just see training done very professionally leading to a good safety record and a safe environment within which to train. I don't see one overpowers the other. I mean to me that's always worked and I still believe it to this day.

ALLISON: Anything on the deployments to WestPac in 212? The one that sticks out in my mind always is that Kwang Ju deployment and operating in the snow and everything and then living in the little "ready building" there.

NYLAND: Yes, the little ready room building down there. That was the second pump to WestPac in 212 for me and I guess the first one for me was characterized by the missile shoot that we tried to have in Cubi Point. We had planned it to happen down there in - and I believe I've got the month right. I think it was July – thinking that we'd be able to shoot all the airplanes and it rained 98 inches that month and we played musical airplanes. We had to move them from hanger to hanger. I remember Dan Driscoll down there on the flight line with water up to just about the topsof his boots moving airplanes around and instead of shooting all the airplanes I think we flew less than a hundred hours. We'd get a launch and they couldn't get the drone up and the weather would be bad. We'd be trying to shoot between layers and I'll never forget it, and after a month down there we left and flew out of that and Beak was not happy camper.

ALLISON: Beak was the XO at that time?

NYLAND: By then I believe he'd taken over. That was his first deployment as CO because he had taken over I think, as I recall, in May/June and then we went down there in July, and boy oh boy, I mean I've never seen it rain like that. It was just unbelievable. It reminded me of the monsoons in Vietnam. And 96 or 98 inches in 30 days, it was just unbelievable. So that was one. Of course the Kwang Ju, like you said, was very unique being there in the winter.

ALLISON: Going up to Nightmare Range.

NYLAND: Well what I remember best is that the Koreans didn't have any snow removal other than brooms. And I remember, because by then I was the DSS and I can remember

getting in a jeep with Beak in the morning and going out and driving the runway to see if we thought we could take off safely.

In my mind – and I'm sure the percentages are off – but you know how your mind raises the revelation of one over the other – it seemed like every morning we'd get up, we'd check that runway and we'd cancel and then finally by the afternoon we'd be able to fly. The thing that I'll never forget about Kwang Ju is the "old retired RIOs lounge" where we all hung out, sitting around in boots and long johns, playing Risk and stuff. But it seemed to me like I got up every morning, went and had breakfast, I'd go to start the brief and then we'd cancel, so we'd go eat again at the Kwang Gang Club and then of course we'd have to have lunch because we were going to fly in the afternoon and we'd fly in the afternoon and then we'd have dinner, and then that night we'd end up at that little bowling ally and we'd have hotdogs or something. So there I am. I'm eating about six meals a day and I got up to 160 pounds - the most I'd ever weighed in my whole life - when we came back out of that deployment. You know I had no more Velcro on my flight suit.

I remember that weather as being so miserable. I remember landing one time in a snow storm with Spartan [Dan Driscoll] and just, I mean it was just pelting coming down and of course we were trying like crazy to get vis on the end of the runway and get in and we finally snuck in there.

ALLISON: And you really appreciated arresting gear.

NYLAND: Oh boy, oh boy, you sure do.

ALLISON: Operating in WestPac.

NYLAND: Yes.

And I guess the other one I remember about that trip and you were up there was when we went to fight the F-1s up in Misawa.

ALLISON: I didn't go on that but I remember it, I sure do.

NYLAND: Yes, and that's where we had the near mid-air.

ALLISON: [Chuckle] I wasn't going to say anything about that.

NYLAND: And I was the DSS and I'm lounging in my room – I guess I'd already flown or done something. I was back in my room - and somebody came to get me and said, "You need to come out here and take a look at the radome on Beak's airplane, it looks like it's unraveling." Well it turned out it was unraveling because it had a little piece of airplane in it

and it was an amazing 24 hours when the Japanese brought their airplanes in and debriefed themselves. They came right over and said, "Our fault."

ALLISON: Did they?

NYLAND: "Our guy came through the formation without looking through the fight." and it was just a tiny piece of stabilator that was just right on the end of the radome of the F-4. For 24 hours poor Beak was just, I mean he was almost like persona-non gratia. He wasn't getting talked to other than, "We'll have an investigating officer up there to visit you." After the Japanese reviewed everything they came back and said, "Our pilot's fault. We've already taken care of it. We want to continue." And that happens quick when I tell it like that but I will tell you that was a pretty miserable 24 to 36 hours for the squadron and for Beak, and then all of a sudden it was like it was a non-event. We went back to giving them classes and teaching them and then flying tactics with them.

ALLISON: Talk about a close call though.

NYLAND: Oh yes, unbelievable, unbelievable. The young Japanese pilot never saw it. I mean he came through belly up to Beak like that and he came into the fight without having everybody in sight.

ALLISON: And Beak wasn't even aware he had hit anything until he had landed?

NYLAND: Yes, well as he was coming home and the fiberglass started to unravel on that radome, so those two eventually stand out in my mind. Kwang Ju and Misawa and then of course the whole thing with Cubi Point from the first pump over there.

ALLISON: Right.

Another thing about 212 - and I remember this was emphasized - and the leader behind this was Beak's RIO "Clutch" [Gary] McCutcheon, being good at Happy Hour, you know I mean putting on a good act at a Happy Hour. I mean it was okay to do certain things at a Happy Hour but there were in limits.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: It wasn't an out of control kind of a thing.

NYLAND: Well I mean I think in my mind that kind of comes back to the professionalism that breeds the camaraderie. You know people always used to look at me when I was the wing commander and as part of my commander's intent it said, "You will have fun."

They said, “That’s pretty unusual to find in there.” I said, “Yes, but it’s important because these are great people and part of this is having fun.” It’s the camaraderie. It’s getting to know the guy who’s in your back seat or who’s going to be on you wing. So if the bullets fly what does that mean? What’s that relationship? And so you don’t develop that only at the office. You develop that in other places too, which is why I’ve always said that the Marine Corps is not a profession, it’s a way of life because it does go 24/7. So I think that was part of it too. You know Beak was like that and I mean I’ve known Beak, he and I have been together since I was a 1st lieutenant and he was a major.

I used to write the song books. You know we’d have song practice, then we’d go to the club and we’d sing the songs so that everybody knows the words and we were unified in, you know, “Here come the Lancers,” or when I had [VMFA-] 232, “Here come the Red Devils.” So I think those things are important but it does; it runs around the clock. You can’t just be professional in the air. You’ve got to be professional on the ground and you’ve got to be professional when you’re out enjoying the camaraderie of your fellow Marines and it’s all part of the package I think.

I think if the American public was forced to define what it is that they love about the Marine Corps and why we have a Marine Corps that one word would be professionalism. That’s what the American public sees. That’s what they expect when they see a Marine; professionalism of the highest caliber. That’s what they have come to expect. So that to me, over time, has become crystal clear. At least that’s “Spider” **NYLAND**’s view of the world [laughter].

ALLISON: That’s good.

Anymore on 212?

NYLAND: It was just a great time. It was a great squadron and a great bunch of people. It was amazing at my retirement here. You saw who was there. You know I had Frank McDuffee, Manfred Rietsch and George Tullos, Beak, and others. I mean that’s the kind of friendship; camaraderie, that lasts a lifetime, just absolutely a great outfit. It was a great time.

ALLISON: Right, it was.

Then you come to Headquarters Marine Corps.

NYLAND: Yes, I came to Washington for the first time, other than to go to school.

ALLISON: I guess that was a real culture shock.

NYLAND: Yes. Actually I went by way of Newport [RI]. I went to Newport to Naval Command and Staff College up at the Navy War College, which was really terrific, a great opportunity and a great program. I think in retrospect one of the real beauties, which somebody told me at the time but I'm not sure that it really sunk in, was that you basically, as a major, had an opportunity to take top level school because up there the curricula are almost unchanged between the two classes (the junior course and senior course) and so it was really quite an opportunity to go to junior school there I thought. So I did that. You know we did the Defense Economics and Decision Making and the Strategy and Policy and during the naval operations period I did a special project on [Tupolev TU-22M] Backfire bombers over at the Center for Naval Research and teamed up with a couple of great guys from the Navy on that talking about Sparrows and Phoenix missiles against the EW [electronic warning] systems of the Backfire bomber.

But then I graduated and came to Washington for the first time and was hired initially to go in and be the Aviation Safety Officer in the DCS [Deputy Chief of Staff] Aviation for the Marine Corps and worked for Chuck Geiger, and DCS Air was Bill White and Clay Comfort was his Deputy.

ALLISON: General [John R.] Dailey was up here too.

NYLAND: "Zorro" [John R. Dailey] was a colonel at the time and he was the head of APP [Aviation, Plans and Programs]. At least initially and then at some point through that tour he was selected for one-star and he became the Deputy.

ALLISON: This would have been like '81/'82?

NYLAND: '81/'82, and I stayed in Aviation Safety for about a year I guess, maybe not quite a year, and then I moved over to Aviation Plans and Programs- APP and I became what is affectionately known as the "Bag Man". I was the Congressional Liaison Budget Officer for General [William H.] Fitch when he replaced General White. By then General Dailey was the Deputy and Gordon Booth was the head of APP. Then I served the rest of my tour in APP doing budgets down on the [Capitol] "Hill" over with the Navy staff and doing those kinds of issues. But the first year in Safety was pretty exciting. That was the first time that there had actually been a Safety Department inside Aviation.

It had before that sort of resided underneath somebody else, either kind of in those days Aviation Training was in the hallway with Aviation and AAB, which was the admin area, which is where I think Safety sort of resided before then. But Colonel Chuck Geiger was the first guy to be a department head with safety and he had me as a Safety Officer on the fixed-wing side and we had a guy named Dave Nye, and he did rotary wing and then we both kind of dabbled in the NATOPS piece as I recall. But we started to get more into the safety education business and to keep it standardized so every time there was a commander's course for instance one of the three of us went out to teach it, you know the part that came from Headquarters Marine Corps; "This is what you ought to be thinking about as a commander," and so on and so forth.

ALLISON: Those commander's courses, were they held at D.C.?

NYLAND: No, Monterey, at the [Navy] Postgraduate School

ALLISON: Is that something all commanders go to before they take command?

NYLAND: Yes, it didn't used to be that way. It used to be all we had was the Aviation Safety Course, which I went through, which was as, I recall, six weeks long and I went through that when I was in 212 before I left Ops and went to the DSS. And then I'm not exactly sure when it started. I believe the Navy probably started it a little in advance of us but then we recognized the value and got onboard pretty quickly with this commander's course and they used to send all their PCOs- prospective commanding officers, out there. As I recall it was only a week long, maybe only four days of the week for that matter, but it was designed to tell you what you should expect from your Aviation Safety Officer, "Here's what he or she has been educated to do for you. Here are the resources. Here are things you should think of as a commander for the tone that you will set for safety." So it was really a first big step into kind of capitalizing on that DSS thing and making the commander really understand, "The buck does---," in Harry Truman language, ". . . stop here." and "This squadron is going to operate in the manner in which you expect it. You've got some trained guys and gals. This is what they've been given so you know what they know at the macro level of which you can demand of them and here are resources." and so it was pretty good. So we started doing that and now we started ensuring that we got our commanders to that and we started ensuring that we got our Aviation Safety Officers school-trained early in their tenure and then retained in the squadron for a specified period of time. We changed the TOs

[table of organization] around to reflect--initially some of the billets were x-coded billets which means it may or may not be filled to make them straight TO billets so they had to be filled working with [Department of] Manpower. So we made some pretty good progress in that year that I was there and it was interesting. I learned a lot.

ALLISON: Were there any hot issues?

NYLAND: Crashing too many airplanes.

ALLISON: Well what's your perspective on that, that the Marine Corps perennially has the highest accident rate of all the services?

NYLAND: Well I think there are a lot of things that go into that, not the least of which is how you calculate that. All the other services, just for starters, have other communities that fly, if you will, routine long hours, long flights, on auto-pilots that build up a lot of hours.

ALLISON: P-3s.

NYLAND: Sure. You know, 747s, 767s, you name them. All the other services have those but us so right away we're at a numerical disadvantage because everything we fly is tactical. We don't have the long haul, the hours built, so right away there, in my mind, is a certain disparity. That's not enough to offset what historically we had, which was a pretty miserable rate, and I think part of that was before we really started to get into this professionalism like we had in 212 there was a lot of – a lot here for me – of "Boy, look what I can do with this airplane!"- be it helicopter or be it jet. I don't think that there was the -- I know the initial training wasn't resident. I mean having spent a tour at [VMFAT-] 101, as we've talked about before, I know when I went to WestPac the first time to Vietnam with 80/85 hours in the F-4 and most of that was flown with another student just out getting enough hours so we could go to WestPac, and what we do even as recently as ten years after that point and what we do now is hugely different; how we train, how we introduce the professional aspects, how we introduce the NATOPS, and it's just vastly different and I think that's part of why you've seen our safety record become better. That plus the commander's interest in, "How do you get your arms around all this?" the professional ball; putting it all together and making it all sit there and make sense, but as you pointed out, not at the expense of good training but in support of and in concert with good training. I mean you see some guys who say, "Hey, if you don't fly them at all you won't crash them."

Okay, so then you don't have a trained set of pilots/aircrews. And if you don't let them do the harder missions or some of them you can't execute everything if the balloon goes up. So I mean the T&R manual's graduated for a reason and we have continued to refine that. I mean you have to know what your people's capabilities are and if you don't know that you probably ought not be CO anyway. If you can't sit down and say, "This is the kind of thing I can expect from Pilot A, B, C, or WSO/RIO [weapons sensor operator/radar intercept officer] A, B, C," you're not engaged enough. I mean you need to be involved. One of the analogies that I used to like talking about being in a squadron was, you know as a squadron commander that's the last time you're in the pool with all the players. If you get to be a group commander you've got a bigger number of pools and you can't be in with all the players. When you're in a squadron you're in the pool with all the players, that includes guys on the hanger deck, guys in the S-shops, and the guys that drive and fly the airplanes and you ought to know them like the back of your hand in what do they do, how's their home life, how's their kids. All those pieces are important. I mean you can legislate a lot of things on high. But you can't legislate against stupidity. That's still going to happen and creep in. But as a squadron commander that's where the rubber meets the road.

ALLISON: You really have an influence.

NYLAND: That's it. That is it and what you do for and with your unit can have all the difference in the world. So I think over time we've gotten a lot better and we have a pretty darn good safety record now. Like I said, you can't legislate against stupidity. There are guys and gals that are going to go do something dumb every once in a while and that's tragic particularly if it costs their life and others or the loss of an asset, but by in large I think that given all of our operations are tactical we have come a long, long way. I mean we used to – I'm trying to remember. I'm thinking when I was there we were crashing 16/17 airplanes a year; alphas [Class A accidents – loss of an aircraft and/or a life]; when I was here in '81. I was a young aqviation safety officer; major, just about ready to be looked at for lieutenant colonel.

ALLISON: And even that was good compared to the old days before that; Vietnam, Korea. It was just phenomenal how many planes they crashed.

NYLAND: Yes.

So I did that for a year and it was interesting and rewarding. Then I was the Congressional liaison budget guy, which was really quite fascinating.

ALLISON: That was your first job where you really were in the internal working setup of Washington.

NYLAND: Yes, that was the first time I started going to the Hill and working on the inside. I used to keep a couple of coats and ties in the office because I'd go down there and talk to staffers and other people, and I remember probably the single individual who helped me the most was then Lieutenant Colonel [James L.] "Jim" Jones, who was in the Senate liaison down there and who obviously went on to become Commandant and then Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and we're still good friends to this day. But I went down there and I said, "I've never been here before." [Laughter] "Show me how to do this." And it was very interesting, very much an eye-opener because you really don't have any appreciation out in the operating forces, at least early on, about how the budgets are translated, how that's translated on the Hill, "Why is it that if I hear about this new missile I can't have it in three months?" and so I thought that that job, among other things besides being just fascinating, really prepared me when I went back to be a squadron commander and to be able to articulate to people in the squadron about, "Okay, we've got an old airplane. We've got parts problems. We'd like to get this or that. This is why we can't just get it. This is how the system works." And I thought that was an important part of being a CO as well, you know not just saying, "Well those guys", or "them".

I think it was hugely beneficial to be able to talk to people about that and then also to talk to them about, "It is not the end of the world to go to Washington." The thing about going to Washington is you just need to do it at the right time in your progression so that you learn and you get back to doing what you're doing in time to get that XO or department head or CO slot. And so I felt like coming out of Washington that was the first of what turned out to be four tours. As I point out to people, I was never a volunteer although I'm also quick to point out that every time I came up here and I left I was better prepared to do what I did next for having been here. That was a wonderful job and I learned an awful lot from General Fitch and I was in there with guys like Fred McCorkle and Pat Finneran and Monte Tennes, and Beak was in there before he went down on the Navy staff, and Norm Ehlert. I mean we just had some horses in there.

ALLISON: All in APP there?

NYLAND: In APP. And then we had a bunch of great guys down the hallway in APW [Aviation Weapons Requirements] also. You know [J.P.] "Monk" Monroe was the head down there. There's Bob Balsh and Bob Magnus who now has got my old job. [Randall L.] "Randy" West who retired as a two-star was down there; Terry Mackey, Dave Seder, Bill Egan. I mean so there was another one of those that was almost like a, it was almost like a 212 kind of thing in the hallway. General Fitch could give you the numbers and everything – but out of the time when he was DCS Air with the group of us that were there, the number that made general; me, Magnus, West, McCorkle, maybe a couple others in there that I'm not thinking of right now.

But so it was just another one of those, you hit the place at the right time and it was like being in the squadron. There was no pushing and shoving between APP and APW, everybody just worked together. I mean it was terrific and they had all the program details and everything. If I needed something to get down to the Hill to say, "Why are you doing it that way?" man, I'd run down there, Bobby Magnus would give it to me or Randy West or whoever and I'd take it and I'd go explain it to the Hill, and I mean it was another one of those sort of real unique times.

ALLISON: What kind of a personality was General Fitch? You hear a lot of things about him being a little irascible or rough.

NYLAND: Well he's a stern task master but I'll tell you he's incredibly smart and talented and he knew the Hill very, very well. He had done previous time up here in DDR&E [Deputy Defense Research and Engineering] with OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] and other places and he had a lot of contacts on the Hill, you know guys like Carl Smith, Tony Batista, Paul Maglichetti- these guys come to my mind – and I learned an awful lot from General Bill Fitch. He had great vision. He understood programming. He understood budgeting and he understood NAVAIR [U.S. Navy Naval Air Systems Command] and airplanes so it was a great learning experience, I mean working for General Fitch.

ALLISON: Learning how the Navy works and the relationship between Marine air and the Navy.

NYLAND: Right.

ALLISON: What were some of the big issues that you were working on at that time; do any come to mind?

NYLAND: The biggest one that comes to mind was when we were trying to get the two-seat [F/A-18] Hornet and Charlie Carr was down in APW. I was in APP. And trying to get the two-seat Hornet into the program because as you know when the Hornet was first built they were all A-models (single-seat) for all sales here. There were some "B" models for training but there were no [two-seat tactical versions], and we wanted to get to where we are today tactically so a lot of that vision came during General Fitch's time about getting an airplane like the Lot 21s and 22s where it doesn't matter what the RIO or the WSO is looking at on his radar, the pilot can be doing something different on his, and I mean just totally interleaved and interoperable cockpits. So I think that was one of the big ones.

The other big one was the V-22, which in those days was known as the JVX.

ALLISON: That was just starting to come on-line.

NYLAND: It was a big joint program at that time and we were going to buy 550 airplanes in those days. I think the Army was in for better than 500. The Army was supposed to develop the engine. It was going to be called the 'Modern Technology Engine'. The Air Force was in, the Navy was in, and then the Army decided to go LHX and they kind of went a different way for a while and then they dropped out of the program, and of course I left town. But those were probably the two biggest programs that we were looking at, at the time I think.

ALLISON: What was the thinking among the officers like yourself; young field-grade officers, about something like the MV-22; the Osprey?

NYLAND: I thought it was pretty exciting. I mean I had a lot of time riding in "Phrogs" [CH-46s] and I mean I think then, as today, this thing (the MV-22) will revolutionize the way we do things not only tactically but I mean it's such a difference from the thing that I used to think about when I was a wing commander. If I'm sending a Phrog squadron to CAX [Combined Arms Exercise] from New River they leave a week to ten days early to get out there. They hip-hop across the whole U.S. and then they do the same thing to come back.

Think about a self-deployable MV-22 who already has revolutionized your tactics but now, because it can go there in one leg, leaves the day before the CAX and comes home the day after the CAX. You just bought your Marines 18 days at home base. Either for training, time with family, whatever.

So I think the MV-22 from the tactical standpoint is going to be incredible because of the self-deploy ability and the way we'll be able to change our tactics. But I think there are other advantages that we don't often think about that over the long run will be equally important to the Marines that we hope to train and retain.

ALLISON: Where was the opposition coming from on the F-18D, going back to that?

NYLAND: Oh, I think everybody is a product of what they grew up in and so a lot of the guys that were early on in the F-18A world had originally been in an F-8. They didn't much like the F-4 because it had a RIO [radar intercept officer].

ALLISON: [Chuckle] The old fighter pilot mentality.

NYLAND: Yes, and then there's always the budget. You know if you have to buy a second guy, train him, keep him for 20 years and then retire him, that's not insignificant. On the other hand I would submit if that guy in the back saves one 30 million dollar airplane, it's pretty easy to hire, train and retain a bunch of them for 30 million dollars.

ALLISON: So you were looking at it from a safety standpoint.

NYLAND: So I'm looking at it from the standpoint of all this wizardry is really great but what happened if the information flow I'm supposed to get is supposed to happen in two seconds and the system is down and it neither never comes or it comes in six seconds, or if there's no one there to backup and say, "Gee, did that INS [inertial navigation system] drift? Have I got the right TacAN [tactical air navigation] in?" I think two out of the first three or four Hornets that we crashed were because they had a wrong TacAN in, things that a second guy would have caught. And then the airplane is so capable.

How can you possibly stay totally current in everything, particularly to include the FAC (A)/TAC(A) [forward air controller airborne, tactical air controller airborne] work without getting that second guy? And so we were saying, and that was our perspective, was "We're close air support. We need the FAC (A). We need the TAC(A) and that's done by two-seated airplanes."

ALLISON: You were even looking at it at that time as a role for it there.

NYLAND: Oh, you bet, absolutely.

ALLISON: It's really worked out well in that role.

NYLAND: Oh, let me tell you, everybody who ever has one come supporting doesn't want anything to come back but them. I mean it's a terrifically capable airplane and it's even more so because we upgraded the radar and the software in the airplane.

ALLISON: Shoot the HARM [high speed anti-radiation missile] and everything. It's a high demand DoD asset. It's kind of like the EA-6B.

NYLAND: High demand, low density, yes.

So those were some of the big ones. You know John Lehman was Secretary of the Navy. He was a great supporter of MAWTS [Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1].

ALLISON: Oh yes.

NYLAND: And MAWTS really got going and was able to become the great institution that it's become. A lot of that occurred when John Lehman was Secretary. Of course when Reagan came in that was kind of nice because there was money to start to replace a lot of the older systems. Most of those systems now are running out [chuckle] but we've been using them since then.

I remember one other real highlight for me during that tour anyway was because I was the "Bag Man" dealing with the Hill and I had the opportunity, one year they decided that the Commandant's remarks would be written by some of the legislative guys like me for the different committees and so I got to work on the remarks. As I recall it was to the HASC [House Armed Services Committee] that General [Robert H.] Barrow would deliver in his opening comments and so I got a couple of one-on-one meetings with General Barrow.

ALLISON: Oh, did you?

NYLAND: I got to work on the remarks. In fact when I found out about it I was in Yuma doing something at MAWTS – I can't remember now. Maybe it was a conference or whatever – and I came back and that was really a terrific opportunity. I think I had two one-on-one meetings with the Commandant. But just to sit in the same room with him and talk with him and listen to him articulate and then to work on the remarks was really quite an opportunity.

ALLISON: What kind of a gentleman was he?

NYLAND: Terrific, just magnificent.

ALLISON: It's pretty daunting if you're a major going in and talking to the Commandant.

NYLAND: Oh yes, and he was just truly the epitome of a southern gentleman, the ultimate professional. I mean it was interesting because a lot of times when you'd go to the hearings there would be people rattling newspapers and they'd be looking at things and whatever but it seemed like whenever General Barrow started to speak everything got silent and everybody just paid attention to what General Barrow had to say. He was really terrific.

The other thing that was really interesting in that tour was General Dailey became Deputy of DCS Air and I was over there doing the "Bag Man" job, and I'd been flying out at Andrews [Air Force Base] – I'd gotten a waiver – and General Dailey went out and got current. And so then whenever he needed to go to a conference or something he'd shoot a note over and say, "Can you be gone such and such a time", and so we started traveling around like we'd go to Yuma to MAWTS or somewhere and we'd take an F-4.

It was unbelievable. I mean it was just a great time. In fact I remember one time we went from here to Yuma and we were going to go up to Nellis [Air Force Base] and do something with the Air Force guys; with some of the players from the aggressor squadrons up there, and we took an [F-4] N out there and neither of us had ever flown in an S model. So we went out there and we had a day's worth of lectures and everything on the S model and then we flew, I forget, I don't know, two, three, four support sorties in that until we felt pretty good about it and then we took two S's up there and flew against the aggressors and then came back. I remember sitting in the office – and I may have the days not exactly right but the thought's right – it was like the 10th or 11th of the month and I already had 17 hours, and I'm at Headquarters Marine Corps and I'm going, "You can't hate this." [Laughter]

ALLISON: One thing I remember about "Spider" in the squadron was he was always "down hops".

NYLAND: Always down hops, still am. I still am.

ALLISON: That's right, and that was important for us young guys, remember that, "Hey, you want to fly as much as possible."

NYLAND: Well absolutely. I mean you know how we all used to hang around the Ready Room and if somebody was a minute late, "I'll take his hop!"

ALLISON: That's right, piranhas.

NYLAND: But I think that was part of the fun and that built the camaraderie because everybody knew, man, you had to fight to get those hops. If you got on the schedule, man,

you better be there. That's important because that all comes back to: if you're going to be a professional the brief starts when the brief starts--if you can't be there somebody will take your hop.

ALLISON: That's right, or worse could happen [chuckle].

NYLAND: Yes, and I've pretty much been down hops my whole life [laughter]. I did get one last Hornet hop when I was in Iraq though. Yes [chuckle]. I flew over there in a Bengal [VMFA(AW)-224] airplane and I'd never seen the Litening Pod in the air and so I got one last hop to go up and take a look at that Litening Pod and drill around Iraq and Fallujah.

ALLISON: It's come a long way.

NYLAND: Yes, I mean when I think about when I first started flying F-4s in the F-4B and what we can do in the F-18D today, "phew", I mean this is like Henry "T" and this remote Volkswagen that ran across the desert all by itself, you know I mean unbelievable. I remember [MajGen Michael] "Lancer" Sullivan used to always say down at Cherry Point, he said, "The beauty about the Hornet is it's always up. The bad part about that is everything in the Hornet works except the pilot." [Laughter]

ALLISON: [Laughter]

Do you think that changed Marine aviation--sort of the culture of Marine aviation, the social aspects; having a different airplane like that where it's more technological and button pushing instead of a stick and throttle kind of an airplane?

NYLAND: I think it's a little different but then I guess I would look through the lenses that I got the most time in and I've got about 3,400 hours flying F-4s, and I think because of the capabilities in the Hornet they're much more acutely aware of parameters of flying the airplane that are cued out of the HUD [heads up display] or out of the electronics of the airplane as opposed to things that we knew by feel. Because you don't ever get a lot of those feels in the Hornet. You know I mean you don't get into buffet at 16/17 units and you don't feel that kind of thing so you hear in their dialog a greater recognition and awareness of, you know, "What is alpha? What am I doing with the jet?" whereas for us I mean all we had was an angle of attack anyway and pretty soon you didn't need that because you knew how bad you were shaking in the seat where you were with respect to the angle of attack.

So I think there is a little -- it's much more parameter-technically focused than it was with us. Now the weapons systems; of course we were pretty good at knowing the weapon

systems. Now they're just more of them and they're more capable so there's more there to know as well. But I think that probably the difference is that the F-4 was probably the last of the "seat of the pants" --.F-4/A-4, you know, that era before you got into the fly by wire and electronic.

ALLISON: Yes, you could really fly the F-4 without hydraulics. You could manually fly it.

NYLAND: Depending on how many of the hydraulics were out.

ALLISON: Right, I mean you've got to have something there. But they say you can't even fly an F-18 if you lose the computer system.

NYLAND: You would have to try and reset it. I mean there are very serious emergencies that would happen if you lost the computer but even when it's all working like it's supposed to work its very different just because the F-4 talked to you, the F-18 doesn't talk to you necessarily. I think you start to feel some cues in it as you build up more time and I only have 3/400 hours in the Hornet so it's hard for me to say when you've got a guy that's got 3,000 hours that may say it talks to him. It didn't as much to me but then I've got 3,400 hours in the old Hog [slang for F-4 Phantom] and they have to just take what I say kind of. In fact the one thing that I know for sure because I flew it but I flew it infrequently, I knew as soon as I got in the back seat, you know like when I was the CG at 2d MAW [Marine Aircraft Wing] as opposed to "Captain **ALLISON**" getting in the back seat, now the weapon systems just became less optimized to kill because I wasn't as adept at working the tiles and working the radars the way the guys flying everyday do. It really is becoming, in my mind and I think that JSF [Joint Strike Fighter] will put us to the point where if you're not flying it everyday, every time the pilot gets in there it will be sub-optimized and it will probably ultimately drive us, in my mind because of the dollars and the flight hours and everything, to the point where this idea of guys flying multiple kinds of planes and just keeping a little bit of time in each of them will probably stop and it will probably ultimately maybe even impact guys on staff tours. But if you're not going to be able to devote enough time to be proficient enough to do the basic skills required by the T&R [training and readiness] Manual, I think because it's going to be so automated, it's not something you can walk away from and come back to like you could with the F-4.

You could come back to that but still fly it. You could take it up and land it safely and because you had a good RIO you could get a radar, and you could get a missile and then

because bombing even before we got the AWG-10 and the S model with CCIP [computer controlled impact point] was still pretty much a wind age thing, not anymore, not anymore.

ALLISON: You've got to know how to program the system.

NYLAND: You've got to know how to program it in there. You're going to have to put it in and if you can't do that, you know you just sub-optimized the weapons system.

ALLISON: Kind of a shame in a way but I guess that's just the nature of things.

NYLAND: On the other hand now you look and you figure out when you go out to hit a target you will.

ALLISON: And it better be the right target too.

NYLAND: You may not have to go back three or four times with a truckload of bombs every time. Now you can go out there one time with one small diameter bomb here in the next five years and it's over.

ALLISON: Yes, it's amazing.

Anything else on your tour in Washington sir?

NYLAND: No, I don't think so. I was happy to leave.

ALLISON: Were you? Head back out to Hawaii.

NYLAND: I mean I did learn a lot and I look back on it with great memories but I was excited to go back out there to Hawaii and Beak was the group commander.

ALLISON: You go back out there as the OpsO of MAG-24.

NYLAND: I went out there as the OpsO of MAG-24 and spent a year there as the OpsO. It was a great tour. During that time the commanding general changed out there. You know "Zorro" came out as the CG [commanding general].

ALLISON: Of the [1st Marine] Brigade.

NYLAND: Of the Brigade. He took it from O.K. Steele I think. No, the other way around. He took it from George Cates and then Steele took it from Dailey I think. I'd have to look in my logbook to be sure.

ALLISON: Who was FMFPac [Fleet Marine Force, Pacific] then?

NYLAND: [Les] Brown and then [Andrew W.] "Andy" O'Donnell. Andy was there when we were out there. Charlie Cooper may have taken it over from Les Brown while I was there, I don't know. You know I never spent that much time on the other side of the island. Andy O'Donnell was there when we were all young guys in 212 I remember and I'm not sure

whether he took over from Les Brown or Charlie Cooper -- I'll tell you, when I was out there in 232 Dwayne Gray was at Pac [FMFPac]. And I remember going over to the Birthday Ball on that side of the island and he had the new all year round evening dress.

So Andy O'Donnell and Les Brown must have been the first time. Les Brown followed by Andy O'Donnell I guess was the way it went.

ALLISON: But Beak had the group?

NYLAND: Beak had the group and I want to say that I think George Cates was the Brigade commander. Maybe it was – I don't know – Zorro was it for part of the time and the other two guys were O.K. Steele and George Cates and I can't remember how that sequenced out.

ALLISON: What was your perspective on the MAG? It was sort of a different MAG. I mean you've got rotary wing and you've got fixed-wing in there.

NYLAND: Plus air control. You've got MACS [Marine air control squadron].

ALLISON: It was almost a mini-wing.

NYLAND: Yes it was. In fact in many ways it was almost as big as 1st MAW, not quite but I mean certainly it was diverse. Being OpsO was a great job. I mean it was terrific and of course because Beak and I had known each other so long he pretty much gave me my head. And I had just a wonderful staff there at the group. I had a great bunch of squadron commanders.

ALLISON: Who stood out there that you recall as squadron commanders?

NYLAND: Well "Rag" Burns [?????] had the control squadron and "Rag" was a hard man and a big trainer, and we started working with building our own -- even though we didn't have a MASS [Marine air support squadron] unit there we built our own DASC [direct air support center] out of our capability with the MACS and I remember going down to the big island; Pahokuloa Training Area and doing a lot of work with him, and his OpsO was a Major Richardson.

[Edward R.] "Ed" Langston who went on to become a general officer was the CO of [HMH-] 463, commanded as a major and in those days it was [CH-] 53s and [UH-1] "Hueys."

We had Gray Medinger was a squadron commander, Dave McSorly was another one. Of course all the F-4 squadron commanders; Joe Mitchell (call sign Joe D' Mitch), he's down here [Pensacola, Florida] now, a retired colonel, works at MSTP [MAGTF Staff Training Program] and runs their intel business for them I think in the gaming shop. But Mel Johnson,

"Fish" Johnson – oh shoot, J.J. Barta who went to 212 and then went over and was the regimental S-4, and boy, he about wore out the ground guys [chuckle]. He was a bald interview [phonetic]. See in those days of course we were still providing the helicopter squadrons for the MEUs [Marine expeditionary units] so they stayed very busy. In fact while I was there we even stood up, we re-stood up the "Purple Foxes," HMM- 364 came back to life in Hawaii because we needed them for the training base and that was also about the time we started to look inside Marine aviation as I recall about PCS-ing [permanent change of station] some rotary wing assets to Okinawa and ultimately [HMM-] 262, which was a Hawaii squadron, became PCS'ed out there. But we stood up 364. Lots of major training exercises with the whole of the Brigade at Pahokuloa plus all the standard stuff; deploy for CAX [combined arms exercise], and wait on shipping; deploy for WTI [Weapons and Tactics Instructor], deploy for Top Gun; all the things that we'd always done, so I mean there was no moss growing on anybody's boots while we were out there. It was a busy time but it was fun. It was just being back in Hawaii and already understanding a lot about how operations worked out there and then at Group 3 it was terrific. I mean we took arresting gear down to Hilo so we'd have a place for the F-4s to turn instead of the long legs like you and I used to fly down and back with tankers or maybe not with tankers. So that was a busy time. There was a lot going on.

ALLISON: Also the runway was closed at K-Bay [Kaneohe Bay, HI], and you had to operate from Barbers Point.

NYLAND: Yes. But unfortunately that happened just as I took over as CO of VMFA-232, so while I was the MAG-24 OpsO the field was mostly open and then they closed it for extended; I guess it was probably 16 to 18 months while they re-cored it because underneath the macadam it was not substantial. Underneath their top layer of macadam it actually was deteriorating underneath. I mean when they take a cylindrical soil sample there was something not good below the level of the macadam.

So they closed it and when I took over 232 we were at Barbers Point. I was at Barbers Point the whole time until I went to WestPac and then when I came back from WestPac was when we finally got to come back into K-Bay.

ALLISON: You didn't actually have your Admin shop set up over there. It still was just for operations, right?

NYLAND: I had everything over there.

ALLISON: Oh you did; you moved the whole squadron over? You had the office spaces and everything there?

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: That must have been interesting.

NYLAND: So we were very fortunate from one standpoint. My biggest fear had been that we would either hurt of kill some Marines making that trip out there everyday.

ALLISON: Oh, okay, on the highways.

NYLAND: And fortunately we did not but it was a long way over there, I mean driving over there or riding in whatever transportation we could conger up. Man that was tough.

ALLISON: Looking at the command chronologies, I noted that there were no aircraft crashes or anything during that time period.

NYLAND: No.

ALLISON: So I guess everything was going good in the sense of safety.

NYLAND: Well I mean we paid a lot of attention to it. Now that doesn't mean we weren't without incident. In fact I'll tell you I took over the squadron and it was either a Thursday or a Friday and I had them work that weekend because we didn't have very many jets up and I asked Beak if his H&MS motor guys would work over the weekend because I needed a motor, which they did, and they gave us the motor on Sunday and we installed it over Sunday night and Monday morning. But anyway on Monday we were getting ready to go test-hop that airplane and when it went to the final checker the ordnance Marine accidentally let the Sparrow arming pin go down the intake.

ALLISON: Oh, of the brand new engine?

NYLAND: Brand new motor. It never even got off the ground and I'll never forget calling Beak and saying, "Well here I am. I've been in command four days. I asked your guys to work over the weekend. They gave me a new motor. I was getting ready to test hop the airplane this afternoon and they FOD'd [foreign object damaged] the motor." and he said to me, he said, "Well you know what Spider, he said, that sucks." He said, "But you know what, the sun's going to come up tomorrow so get on with it." [Laughter], I'll never forget that though as long as I live. I thought, "My God, I've been here four days and I've already gooned it up." [Laughter] But we did, we worked pretty hard at keeping them safe. In fact we

never had a major mishap while I was CO, which I was very proud of and proud of those Marines that made it happen that way.

Yes, and we flew some good jets. We had some hardworking young folks there in the garage floor and some of my young officers really did a terrific job down there.

ALLISON: When you take over a squadron that's a huge thing and you have that first AOM [all officers meeting] to set policy, do you remember what you told your officers?

NYLAND: Well sort of your guidance and intent. Well I had actually started preparing for it long before that. I'd been pretty hopeful when I left the aviation hallway up here [at HQMC] and going to Hawaii that I was going to get a squadron and so I actually had started a little folder, and not wanting to do other people's jobs but certainly I had a page for everybody in there; the S-1 and S-2, the S-3, S-4, the AMO [aircraft maintenance officer], XO, and started, things that had stuck with me over time that I thought were important and so I had that. Then was also when I developed the use of this thing; the professionalism word and what does that mean, you know like pride in planning an operation and so that's the first time that I ever used that, and you remember playing the dollar bill game?

ALLISON: Oh yes.

NYLAND: I remember that was my example for integrity. I said, "Integrity is playing the dollar bill game without the dollar bill. And so when you get up in the morning, if you're given a number other than what you thought to avoid buying a small round of beers for your buddies, then how do you shave?" So that was kind of really mine. I mean for me that was it. That was the professionalism. That was, "The Red Devils are going to be the best fighter squadron in the Marine Corps and this is the way I see that happening." I mean we went after it from safety to SOP [standard operating procedures] to maintenance to everything and I was supported by great, great people. You know Cajun [George Tullos] was my XO after a short while and later on we got "Smoke" [Larry] Staak in the squadron.

I had a great bunch of young guys. Chris "Squeak" Geiser, he was in 232 when we were in Hawaii; when we were in 212. "Squeak" was my OpsO and then later my Maintenance Officer. Jim "Ratzo" Ardialo was my maintenance officer. I had great young guys; Cal Jumper, "Wookie," and "Slam" Amland working down in maintenance and in Ops, and Joe Rooney, "Pilgrim," Phil Tissue "Scar", and Troy Brewer "Ugly," but we had some really terrific young officers. In fact I've still got at home a table about this size that they had

made in the Philippines. It has all the "scopes"-- the RIOs, and "sticks and scopes" of all the [officers] --looking at it and remembering all those guys because they were really terrific.

ALLISON: You had a new crop, how did that compare to 212?

NYLAND: It wasn't like 212. In fact when we went to WestPac, we went over there in--I took over in the summer of '85 and turned over in the summer of '87 and we were in WestPac in '86, I think, from March or April until October and then in early '87 we deployed to the mainland for training. But when we got over there I want to say we only had five or six experienced pilots and like 14 to 15 new ones. We had either 14 or 15 RIOs and of course we had to give up three guys to the group staff or whatever. Because the experienced pilots were so few I had to give all RIOs and so we ended up with 12 RIOs and 12 airplanes. Of course the guys on the group staff flew with us regularly but I had so few experienced pilots. Cajun I think was the only field grade pilot and I think by that time both Wookie, Slam, Pilgrim, "Whale" Jonas and "Ugly" and I think most of them by then were division leaders or brand new division leaders but we had just a whole slug of new pilots. So I mean we got a lot of good training done over there but it was interesting to go over, not like 212 was where everybody already had, you know I mean the bulk of the guys all had 1,000 hours in the jet and everything. So we had a good deployment. It was good.

ALLISON: Was it a typical WestPac deployment then; you'd go to Iwakuni and go up to Korea?

NYLAND: No, there wasn't quite as much moving as there was when we were out there in 212 and of course in 212 there was nowhere near the moving when I was out there in 115. But I must have been snake-bit with these runways because while I was out there at Iwakuni they closed the runway.

We had to go to Osan and we lived in tents in Osan that they put up for us; hardback tents for us and "Trip Trey" [VMFA-333] down by the golf course over there and then we left some maintenance in Iwakuni so we could do phase inspections and then one day a week they'd open up the taxiway or the runway and we'd run in there and swap out the jets and stuff, so I think we were in Osan for probably six or seven weeks. We did one deployment to Cubi Point and we ran a turn-det that the wing actually sat on top of and we provided people out of Kadena so we could run in and out of there and train all the time. But there was not as much movement as in the old days but still we had good training over there in Korea in

particular and in the Philippines when we were down there. We were in the Philippines down there for Cope Thunder and flying in that and then the time out of Osan, and it was pretty good.

ALLISON: Were things changing in Marine aviation? I remember we were pretty air-to-air heavy in 212 and when I was in 112 in the Reserves in this time period. Was there more and more emphasis coming in about air-to-ground?

NYLAND: Well I think there was. You know we used to always laughingly run around and say, "Big "F", little "A", although I think the reality was they were both supposed to be the same size and maybe the "A" is supposed to be a little bit bigger, so we were starting to pay a lot more attention. Plus the weapons system was getting better because then we had the CCIP mode in the S model and we started having a system that could get you a lot better than the old, "Okay, that'll be 112 mils."

So we flew a lot of air-to-ground over there in the Nightmare Range and a lot of low-level work, and in that timeframe everybody was into the pop-ups so we spent a lot of time with the pop-ups and low-level work. And we still did a fair amount of air-to-air but I would guess that we were much more balanced maybe than when we were in 212 and we used to do, especially in Hawaii, you know I mean we'd take some bombs every now and then to Kahoolawe but the rest of the time we were, you know that's why people used to always say about 212 was that, "Nobody flies a better 1v1 F-4 than guys that came out of Hawaii," because that's all you could do out there [chuckle]. That wasn't exactly true but it was not too far off. Guys that grew up in Hawaii could fly good 1v1. I mean they knew their jet and they knew how to move it around.

ALLISON: Plus it's so easy to do. I mean it's just right off the end of the runway.

NYLAND: Yes, take off, jog 30 degrees left, 25 miles, "Fights on!" But yes, that was a great tour. I mean that went by like the blink of an eye. I mean two years just "psst", and like I said, that was the one time when you're actually in the pool swimming around and I just loved it. It was great. And 232 did very, very well I think, you know not necessarily to pat myself on the back, but certainly all the great people that we had in that squadron that worked so hard to make sure that the Red Devils had a good reputation, because as you know, historically the Red Devils didn't always enjoy the best of reputations.

ALLISON: They didn't when I was in 212.

NYLAND: All the squadrons used to go through that, of course when you're in the sister squadron you know, nobody looks good except your squadron. But I can remember when I was in WestPac in 115 and we called 232 the "Red Tail Flies" because they had red tails. But I was very proud of that squadron. The people in it really performed quite well and I think at the end of those two years everybody walked away with their head held very high and many of them have gone on to be squadron commanders. That superb reputation persists today.

In fact that whole slug of those brand new pilots, of those that stayed in, shoot, Phil Tissue was a RIO and then went back and became F/A-18D squadron commander. "Slam" Amlan had a squadron. "Wookie" had a squadron. "B-Cube" [???] had a squadron-- Barry Gazelle. The guys that got out and stayed in the Reserves have all done well too. So I mean we had a good bunch of guys.

ALLISON: You had the 60th anniversary of the Red Devils too while you were out there.

NYLAND: Yes, in fact I'm going out to the big anniversary in February of this year. Out in San Diego, they asked me if I'd come out. I think it's the 75th if I'm not wrong, something like that. I have to look in the book to be sure but it's on up there.

ALLISON: That sounds about right.

NYLAND: But we had the big one there and we had it over at the Hilton when I was the CO and had just a great time. You know it was a very nice evening formally and kind of like the Marine Corps Birthday Ball, and a lot of fun.

ALLISON: As you came up through the ranks, who were some of your role models, leadership models or mentors?

NYLAND: Well Beak for sure; Zorro.

ALLISON: What was it that you wanted to pattern yourself after; what did they bring?

NYLAND: Well I think a couple of things. One was always the professionalism that they each had; the idea that you could and it was okay to have fun while you're doing this; the way they dealt with people. I think for both of them one of the things that obviously stands out in my mind was they always kind of let me have my head. You know they didn't try to be the OpsO when I was the OpsO. They didn't try to be the DSS. I probably appreciated that more than anything because you know there's nothing exciting about being a department head if you have the leadership saying daily, "Here's your list of 'to-do's' and here's how to do them."

They let you be who you were supposed to be and learn in the process, which was important to me and I've always cherished that and also tried to always be that way when I had people working for me. You know it's easy to sit down and give them an answer because you did it. It's better to talk them about it and let them figure it out so they understand why you got where you got or how they got where they got. They may even have a better way, which is another bad thing about handing out the answer to them. So I think those are the things that were important to me; let you run your own business. As long as you stayed professional, it's okay to have fun. In fact it's important because it's part of the camaraderie part of the family. I've been with Beak since 1971. He and I flew at every rank together except three and four-star for me and two-star, but when I was a one-star I remember we got special dispensation from General [William] Keyes up at MarForLant [Marine Forces, Atlantic] so that we could have one hop together in a Hornet. I've got a picture of it. So 1st lieutenant through brigadier general we flew together at every rank.

ALLISON: It's funny in the Marine Corps, it's small enough where you can kind of stay with people throughout your career and you see that with Beak and also with Mad Dog [Robert Maddocks].

NYLAND: Yes, you know Manfred [Rietsch] was another one. I mean I think Manfred, he certainly taught me an awful lot about professionalism and briefing and those kinds of things when he came to 212 from Top Gun. I learned one heck of a lot from General Fitch, working in the building and "How do you do that? How do you make things better for the Marines?" So I've been fortunate and I've had a lot of great peers too, you know like Fred McCorkle and George Tullos and Smoke Staak and guys that were never reluctant to share an idea or nobody worried between all of us who got the credit as long as whatever we did was good for either that squadron or that part of the institution, or whatever. So I've been really blessed and fortunate. I look back on it and I said, "You know, it's just been an incredible opportunity." It's been magnificent. But that was a great tour being CO, you know doing WestPac and then going to Yuma for one last time, going up flying in Red Flag.

ALLISON: That was the end of an era, end of the Phantoms; the F-18s were coming in.

NYLAND: Yes, just about. I turned over the squadron to Cajun and he brought the last of the F-4s to the boneyard. In fact the one that's out here in the Udvar-Hazy Museum, he and [Sidney] "Spit" Meade flew it in here. Their names are on it.

ALLISON: Spit is another one that became a squadron commander.

NYLAND: MALS down in Beaufort, MALS-31. Remember when he used to go to those power-lifting meets on Saturdays [laughter]? "Big Iron" Susnick; Larry Lemovitch [???], I miss all those guys. The memories are just great.

ALLISON: How were the Phantoms holding up? Were you flying S's?

NYLAND: Yes, we were flying S's and we did pretty good. I mean we were flying 400-hour months, keeping the training going. We flew pretty hard right up until the end.

ALLISON: That would be a lot even for an F-18 squadron today, wouldn't it?

NYLAND: Yes, it would keep them busy; 12 jets. Of course in Hawaii, you know 400 hours was 300 plus sorties because all you're doing is turning and burning.

ALLISON: That's right.

NYLAND: And I'm not sure exactly how long George [Air Force Base] had F-4's, maybe another six/seven months before . . . .

ALLISON: After he took over.

NYLAND: Yes. When we came back from WestPac that was the last time 232 went to WestPac in F-4s so it was certainly, if not the end, the signal to the end of an era with the F-4s going to WestPac [chuckle]. That was a terrific tour.

ALLISON: Anything else sir on that time in 232?

NYLAND: Just a great bunch of people that really, really came together and I think made a difference. It was good, a great time.

ALLISON: Then you head back to Washington.

NYLAND: Yes, well I went to Air War College first.

ALLISON: Learned about air power.

NYLAND: I learned about air power. I will never forget one of the first shocks in my life was at Newport [RI]. You did everything in trimesters so you were focused on one particular area and down there at AWC we ran multiple things at a time and I remember after having been there for a month or two and they said on Monday we were going to talk about CAS [close air support] and I remember going home saying, "Well great, that's something I can talk about. I understand that really well," and then coming in on Monday and first slide is, "The Crisis Action System." I said, "Damn! If CAS isn't close air support, man things are

changing. And that turned out to be quite a preview for what I was going to do when I got to the joint staff the next time.

So I went down to Maxwell and had a good time down there. I met a lot of great people from all the services. In fact I even had a couple of guys in my class that had been at Newport with me. We had Denny Abbey who was an Air Force lieutenant colonel and Jim Fulks who was a Marine lieutenant colonel and the three of us had all been at Newport together, and bingo, we all showed up at Montgomery together. So it was a good nine months or ten months; however long it was, and made some good friends and learned a lot and headed off to Washington.

ALLISON: What kind of feeling did you pick up or ideas did you pick up about Marine aviation?

NYLAND: Well we actually had seven Marines I think it was; seven or five, five of us I guess in the senior class and seven in the junior class, but what we had to do was go around and give presentations to all the seminar groups about the Marine Corps and what we did. And I think that we were, I guess, both helpful and successful in helping to articulate what the Marines did and what we brought and why we operated in the MAGTF and why we did things the way that we did. What we did was we teamed up- an air guy and a ground guy went to each of the seminars and I mean there was a clear focus at the school on air power from [Giulio] Douhet forward. In fact I used to laugh. I'd tell people, "Yes, I wanted to know more about the war in the Pacific so I had to take an elective." [Laughter] So the big focus was on the European war, the ball-bearing factories. I took an elective on the war in the Pacific with Dr. Joe Strange who is now on the staff down here at the Marine Corps University, a terrific individual, a great individual and a tremendous instructor. He was magnificent. It was his elective I took where we studied the Pacific campaigns.

ALLISON: I've heard that the Air Force sort of looks down their noses at Marine aviation? It's just some funny little air force that's flying artillery or something like that?

NYLAND: I don't know. I think at some point there may have been people like that years ago that didn't understand what we did, how we did it or why we did it. I've never really run into too many people that after you sit down and talk to them about the MAGTF and the Marines and what we do and how we provide it, that didn't at least understand it. They may still think they could provide it but as I tell them, nobody can provide for the guy on the

ground like we can because we all had to walk on the ground first and we understand it and we understand what it means to him and to his Marines at that particular point in time, and we're going to get there and we're going to make it happen. Nobody treated me as if I was second class or there was any dysfunctional relationship with me. In fact I met an awful lot of great guys and I've met some guys who were F-4 drivers that had been at Osan and who I may have even flown against at different times, and F-16 drivers. I think that's part of the formal education is one thing but it's that informal education and the friendships that you make there that I rank just as important at these schools as I do the formal curriculum. Because your ability to talk to people about the way you operated and something that is not part of that curriculum but certainly is part of all of our professional development, that's just as important to me. So that informal education plus those friendships are hugely important. For instance when I came out of Maxwell and came up here we had 32, maybe 34 of us, of all services that came up here and we had one young guy; Air Force colonel, he was a great, he kept track of all of us and once a month or once a quarter we'd all get together for lunch. Well if you don't think working in this town and not being able to pick up a phone and call somebody and say, "Look, this may not be where you are but can you either steer me or have somebody look at this." I mean that's invaluable and those kind of relationships you don't get from sitting in class and absorbing curricula. You get that from the informal education and the informal gatherings of getting to know people and so I think that's a piece that ranks right up there with the formal dot the i, cross the t type of educational thing. So I didn't find, even over my whole career very many people that you couldn't at least get them to admit that they understood what you were doing and why you did it that way, maybe not fully get onboard. Now there are a couple I'm sure and there always will be and we've got them in the Marine Corps too who are 'Iron Majors' or whoever that, "I don't care what you say. This is the way the Marine Corps does it. That's the only way it can be done." So we all have our own Hezbollah wing as it turns out but it was a good tour for me. I enjoyed it and met a lot of good people.

ALLISON: Did you meet anyone that went on up into high ranks that you might have kept in contact with later on as you came up here?

NYLAND: Well Lance Lord is now the Head of SpaceCom [U.S. Space Command]. He and I were together. [Ronald] "Ron" Keys is now the Head of ACC [Air Combat Command],

down at Norfolk; four-star. There were a couple others in AMC [Air Mobility Command] that retired as three-stars, so yes, there were some guys and gals that moved on out of there, and some; [David R.] "Dave" Love-- so that range from one and going home to four and still on active duty. So yes, we had some pretty great guys in there and we had a lot of fun, and a good tour.

ALLISON: Okay sir, then you came up here to the Joint Staff.

NYLAND: Yes. I was trying like crazy -- when I was down there [William R.] "Rusty" Jones was the monitor and I was trying like crazy—I was calling him from Maxwell and I'm saying, "I think I should go to the West Coast and go to [VMFA-] 531 and get the last tour in those F-4N models out there and I'm current in the airplane. If you hurry and get me out there I won't even have been out of the seat over a year." I kept saying, "I need to go do that," and he's saying, "No, its time for you to come get joint." and I said, "Oh Rusty, come on." He was right, I was wrong. And so I came up here and went to work in the JOD; the Joint Operations Division of the J-3, which was basically the current ops place, and boy was I on a whirlwind.

ALLISON: That's a busy place.

NYLAND: It was just busy as busy could be from the day I got there. The first week I was there I had to go to Wang Computer school. The Joint Staff was the only people on the Wang computer so we had to go to school over here in Rosslyn to learn how to use the Wang and then how to staff things the Joint Staff way because they were in the throes of losing all the secretaries and so basically what we did was deployment orders, execution orders; everything and we typed them ourselves, so we had to go learn all that stuff. And it was one busy place. But I guess there are two things that stand out for me and the first one was I hadn't been there long and I got nominated and became the J-3 rep to a group that would travel to Moscow on dangerous military incidents and over the course of the next 18 months or 20 months from whenever I got nominated to that thing I think we made three trips to Moscow and they came here four or five times, culminating in an agreement that I could actually, when I went back to the fleet, open up the in-flight supplement and see the results of our work.

ALLISON: Is that right?

NYLAND: Yes, and it was kind of like, Incidents at Sea (INCSEA), a long, long standing document of incidents at sea between the Russians and the U.S. This was kind of like that for

across the board but in particular my flavor in it was aviation along with a guy from the Air Staff, and that really stands out. And the other part that stands out is going from like about the second week in July until the third week in January with one weekend off and the rest of the time being in a crisis action team doing everything from that summer until the end of Just Cause and when Just Cause-- the invasion of Panama, I'll never forget on Christmas Day – and you probably saw the picture in my old office. I've got a picture when President [George H.W.] Bush, 41, came to the NMCC [National Military Command Center] where I was a CAT team leader--crisis action team leader. I had about 40 people in there with me. I'm a colonel you know and he comes in the door and he says, "How are you sir?", and I said, [chuckle] "Sir, I'm fine. Thank you for being here." Now here he is the President of the United States. Where could he be on Christmas Day? Home with his family, all these other things and yet there he was in the Pentagon coming in and he walked around that room and shook hands with every one of the people on my team and then shook my hand again before he left, and I'll never forget that and that was just absolutely incredible.

ALLISON: So that was Just Cause going on then?

NYLAND: That was in '89. We went in in the December timeframe as I recall and I think we stood down the CAT team on the third week in January and that's when all the stuff that had been running hard since July, I mean we had been working on a NEO [non-combat evacuation operation] out of Beirut was what got me in July and then we just seemed to go from crisis to crisis. Then we had an exercise that used to be called WINTEX/CIMEX, which was done with the Europeans and so we were not going to cancel that so we just stayed in the CAT Teams and ran that, and then we went into Panama either in the November/December timeframe when that was. And it finally ended, I mean Brenda can tell the story, I went to work I guess it was after the 4th of July weekend or something and I called her and said, "I won't be home tonight." and she said, "Well I'll just leave something in the microwave for you." I said, "No, I won't be home until tomorrow morning." "Oh." and I had just moved onto the CAT teams for nights and that was when we were running one of our operations out of Beirut and it was like that. We had one weekend off, or I had one weekend off and it was on either the day team or the night team until the third week in January. But they were still about 15 hour days.

You had to come in early to do the turnover and you had to stay late to do the other turnover. But that was boy, I mean what an exciting time. I mean I learned so much, you know, and an opportunity to go in and sit down with the Chairman [Joint Chiefs].

ALLISON: Who was the Chairman then?

NYLAND: Initially it was Admiral [William] Crowe; so to go in there and talk with him as we were doing this dangerous incidents agreement. In fact it was he and Marshall Mikhail A. Moiseyev who signed it and then he was followed by [Colin] Powell. Then I remember within the summer of '90 the last thing I did was go down there and brief him on how the MEU would execute a NEO off Liberia. Now you talk about deja vu. How many times have we done that since then?

ALLISON: It hadn't been done before though.

NYLAND: No, and so I went down there and that MEU ultimately did not. They spent like 90-some days off the coast there. But that was the last thing I did was go and see General Powell with my little charts and tell him what we were going to do and I can remember going and briefing Mr. [Dick] Cheney when he was OSD with some of the plans that we were doing coming up out of the J-3. He was OSD, SecDef. And you know, working for a one-star at the time; Hugh Shelton, later the Chairman. Admiral [T. Joseph] Lopez, later a four-star. It was just another opportunity I just was there with terrific people. It seems like every time I get dropped somewhere I get dropped in with a herd of really great people and it was a power-packed two years. I mean [chuckle] in fact I remember for the first time in my life I failed my flight physical when I took it while I was in JOD because I just was so run down. My blood pressure was too low and my eyes, I had to finally start wearing glasses from looking at that screen.

ALLISON: The Wang computer screen.

NYLAND: Yes, but when I left there at the end of a 23/24-months; whatever it was, to go take command down at Pensacola, I was tired. But it had been exciting and I mean I had seen everything from A to double Z. I mean what an opportunity and I mean there was just so much that went on and then the opportunity to interface with people and "whew" it was just packed from real world to exercise.

ALLISON: You were around so many noteworthy people there but do any standout as being head and shoulders above the others?

NYLAND: Well of course the J-3 was Lieutenant General Tom Kelley. His Deputy was then Rear Admiral Barney Kelley who now is a retired four-star and I had lunch with him Friday in Pensacola. He's a Pensacola resident.

ALLISON: Had you made lieutenant colonel at this time then?

NYLAND: Oh, I was a lieutenant colonel and while I was there I was selected for colonel. In fact I got frocked so I could sit on our top level school board and I spent, I guess the better part of a year as a frocked colonel on the Joint Staff, which was good because then it allowed me to become the Head of the CentCom [Central Command] branch inside there. When I first went into JOD EuCom/CentCom was one branch and there was a colonel, Army colonel [Columbus M.] Womble; "Buck" Womble who was called chief JOD and then he had all these, EuCom [European Command], CentCom was WEM - Western Hemisphere. PaCom [Pacific Command] was another and they each had a colonel or a captain in there. And when I got promoted to colonel we ended up breaking EuCom and CentCom apart and having a EuCom head and a CentCom head, which made sense. I mean there was just enough work for those two areas and proved to be particularly true with CentCom in Desert Shield/Desert Storm. But Buck Womble was in there and one of the guys on the Navy side; Will Trafton is a retired captain now on the West Coast. He's still a great friend. Gregory "Grog" Johnson went on to be a four-star Navy admiral. I just saw him this morning up at Bethesda. So I mean you just keep getting these flashbacks that come around. And John Morgan was in there with me and he's a Navy three-star. John Kelly, another one, made admiral, I think he's a three-star admiral. I had a young Air Force major who now is a one-star, [Andrew] "Andy" Dichter. So it's just really amazing. But what a neat opportunity because we looked over so much and what was also interesting was if it wasn't hot in your area and it was in WHEM or PaCom we just all pitched in and so you really did get to see the whole world.

And so it was another extraordinary tour, and again, I came away far better equipped for my next job and far more knowledgeable of how life in the big city and in the upper echelons of the military really work and it was a great tour. And [Thomas] "Tom" Benes who was two behind me, he and a guy named [David] "Dave" van Esselstyn were the two guys, of course now there's Benes, he's a two-star and so is "Guts" [Terry] Robling had that job. He's now a one-star over in Naples.

ALLISON: Goldwater Nichols; any comments on that? You were right there right after that had kicked in.

NYLAND: I guess my only thought was probably – and it's hard to recall – my sense was that some of the services took seriously that you were supposed to send the front-runners to the Joint Staff and some didn't and the legislation made it clear for all of them, "You better." That's kind of where I saw it as impact. For me, the guys that I was surrounded with down there regardless of the service were terrific and I mean they were not parochial. We all learned to be purple. We all learned to articulate how our service operated or what they could bring to a particular operation or exercise. I think the legislation probably just solidified it for everybody. "If you didn't think you should send your best, let me make it perfectly clear to you that we expect that you will." That was an AO's [action officer's] perspective. You know I'm sure that the Service Chiefs at the time had a much different perspective but from where I sat it just codified the idea that you send front-runners here and that's all.

ALLISON: And the Mideast thing was starting to warm up a little bit at that time, it must have been. I mean you had the Iraq/Iranian war.

NYLAND: Well that's part of the crisis that we ran through July before we got into Panama.

ALLISON: And the USS Stark.

NYLAND: So we were running the little boats in the Gulf. It was Operation Earnest Will. I mean there was a brief that went every morning on Earnest Will on how the ships were transited. So I mean that's kind of where I jumped in, you know and then trying to find where the Hezbollah, the targets; all of those things, some of those kinds of issues is what got me to go all the way up to see Mr. Cheney with some of our contingency planning and so forth. So I mean that was a busy time throughout the world with the Gulf heating up, and the [USS] Vincennes shoot down happened while I was there. And the Stark, so there were a lot of things going on in the world. You go into Panama and then, you know it was quite busy but it was a heck of a time.

ALLISON: What were they saying about Saddam Hussein at that time?

NYLAND: I don't think they said anything about him. I don't know, I'd have to look back at the history but if I'm not wrong at that point we were still helping them a little bit I think.

ALLISON: Yes, we were kind of on Iraq's side against Iran.

NYLAND: Yes, after the Shah fell. We threw some backing to Iraq, my guess is in that window; '88 to '90, that's probably where we were, you know either over there or in covert support to Iraq at that point.

ALLISON: Which reminds me of something when we were in 212 is when they had the hostage crisis and we were in Iwakuni, and do you remember when Beak made that speech; that "get ready to go to war speech"? He said something to the effect that there's not another group of people he would rather go to war with. Do you remember that?

NYLAND: Yes, that kind of always stuck in my mind too. When I was a wing commander and I was making a trip around Europe to visit everywhere where we had 2d MAW Marines and we were flying in a [KC-]130, and I'll never forget flying from Incirlik [Turkey] to Taszar, Hungary and flying over that country to include over the Black Sea. In my whole adult life I never thought I would be flying over this country unless it was in an F-4 full of bombs and here I am flying over it in a 130 talking to an ATC [air traffic control] that's sounds like they trained in LA.

ALLISON: Wow, yes, they're former Soviets.

NYLAND: It was just unbelievable. You know I mean you take that coupled with the opportunity as a young lieutenant colonel/colonel to go to Russia -- in fact I found out I was a colonel in Russia.

ALLISON: Oh, is that right?

NYLAND: The board had met and was out but it was hung up somewhere in the staffing it takes forever. So as I leave I have no clue yet whether I'm selected for colonel or not and when I got to Moscow Larry Burgess, he's a retired colonel now out at NRO [National Reconnaissance Office] – a great guy – and he was the assistant naval attaché - he was, I think, a major or a lieutenant colonel – and so they made a call each day of the week back to check on message traffic and things that were happening inside the Marine Corps, and so I told him, I said, "Hey, I'm checking ….", usually if it's going to break most of those lists come out on a Thursday because that's the day that the White House reviews the military things. And I remember asking. We were there for, I don't know, ten days or something like that and I asked for a couple days and nothing and finally I just quit asking. I figured he knew and so we were sitting at the long table getting ready to start negotiations and as always there would be a review of the night before and we had gone to the, I don't know if we'd gone to

the ballet or to hockey or to the circus or whatever it was, and the only words that I knew – you know I knew very few words in Russian but I knew "pelkovnik" was colonel; we knew enough words if we got out on the street and running somewhere and got in trouble we could get some help. And so General Anatoli Boyatko [phonetic] is talking to General Lee Butler and he starts to push his chair back and he says, whatever, "Pelkovnik **NYLAND**." So I turned down there because this is all the pleasantry part – I wasn't paying 100 percent attention to that – I turned down there and he's standing up and they have a bottle of champagne and they are saluting me for being selected for colonel. So I found out from Major General Anatoli Boyatko of the Soviet Armed Forces that I'd been selected for colonel [laughter]. It was terrific.

ALLISON: It was right on the verge of the Soviets' demise but . . . .

NYLAND: Yes, so I mean that was another one of those little things. You know I mean I guess if I sat long enough I could come up with little things. Every one of my tours something or multiple things like that, that are just so memorable.

ALLISON: Roger that.

I think we're about out of time sir.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: Is there any more on the J-Staff and we'll cut it off there.

NYLAND: No, I think that's a great stop point. Again, it was another one of those -- not a volunteer. Once again, I was far better educated and prepared to do whatever I would do next and certainly to help the Marine Corps. Same as the next time when I went from the J-8 to be the Deputy at II MEF [Marine Expeditionary Force] and what I had seen and learned was so useful. I went from J-3, JOD to MATSG [Marine air training support group], and the next tour I went to II MEF. But I went from there to MATSG and again, the ability to sit down with all these guys that are just coming in for the first time and to be able now to articulate a little bit about how Headquarters Marine Corps works, now how the Joint Staff works, talk to them about what's out there in the future, it was terrific. Of course when Desert Shield/Desert Storm started I was the first one on the phone saying, "Hey, you've got to get me out of here and get me in an airplane." and they said, "Hey, you just took over a command down there." But that was a great tour, an awful lot of really great people, and once again I found myself surrounded by wonderful folks and it taught me a lot.

ALLISON: It must have been very educational.

NYLAND: It was. It was terrific, absolutely terrific.

END OF SESSION IV

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

Interviewee: General William L. “Spider” Nyland, USMC

Date: 9 May 2008

Location: Naval Aviation Museum, Pensacola, FL

Interviewer: Dr. Fred Allison

Historian, U.S. Marine Corps History Division

SESSION V

ALLISON: This is the fifth session of a career interview with General William "Spider" **NYLAND**, and today is the 9th of May, 2008. We're doing the interview today at the Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, Florida, the cradle of Naval Aviation.

NYLAND: Amen.

ALLISON: I was really surprised how much this place has changed.

NYLAND: It's beautiful, isn't it?

ALLISON: It is.

NYLAND: And the town. We love the town. We're just perfectly glad to be back here.

ALLISON: But the downtown area, it's not what I remember. I guess the hurricane --

NYLAND: It's coming back, and it's coming slowly, because Ivan killed this place. Actually we had three of them [hurricanes] in 22 months, Ivan being the worst and the first, but you get that kind of intensity, three of them in a row, hard to make much progress.

ALLISON: Right.

NYLAND: And so it's been a tough road to comeback.

ALLISON: They closed down Trader John's -- that's gone.

NYLAND: Yeah. That was a heartbreaker.

ALLISON: Sad day.

NYLAND: That actually was closed down before the hurricane came.

ALLISON: He retired or died, didn't he?

NYLAND: Well, he was mugged.

ALLISON: Mugged?

NYLAND: I mean, of all people in town to get mugged, somebody mugged him, hit him over the head and he never quite recovered from it. And although he didn't die immediately, he subsequently passed away, and there was one bid on the place and they came close to getting it, and then it didn't go through. And then there was a young fellow who was a former Navy lieutenant flight instructor who got it and started to bring it back. I think he got a little bit focused on what it could be, when all people really wanted it to be was what it once was.

ALLISON: So he was making these big changes?

NYLAND: Well, he was going to take the second floor and make that into a nice dining restaurant. And what he really needed to do was focus on the first floor and get the clientele back like Trader used to have.

ALLISON: That clientele.

NYLAND: Whatever it took, no socks, two-colored socks, free beers from 5 to 7. So while it had some sustainability for a little while, it slowly, because he was really focusing on trying to do something on that second floor, when before it had been nothing but some pool tables and another bar.

ALLISON: I don't remember being on the second floor.

NYLAND: So ultimately he didn't succeed and they sold it, and it was closed down when the hurricane hit. When the hurricane hit, it ruined the building, so now all that's left down there is the plaque on the sidewalk.

ALLISON: One of the legendary places of naval aviation.

NYLAND: Absolutely.

ALLISON: Everybody's got a story about Trader John's. Do you have one?

NYLAND: I've got a lot of time in there.

ALLISON: I remember you didn't want to go in the back room, that's what I always heard. If you really want to set your hair on fire, you go in the back room.

NYLAND: Well, the back room was where you had a lot of the paraphernalia that belonged to -- primarily, a lot of it came from the “Blues” [Blue Angels] over the years, and so a few were in the front end of the bar and the few heads that were there, and this little tiny stage, and then in the next room there was a pool table, but back in the left-rear quarter, there

was more old stuff all piled up and trailing up the walls and everything. What a great place, and what a great institution he was. Sad, sad.

ALLISON: Yes. OK, sir, I guess we've got to get down to business now -- you took over MATSG [Marine Air Training Support Group (21)]. That would have been in, what, 1990, '89?

NYLAND: Summer of 1990.

ALLISON: Was this a place that you had desired to go to?

NYLAND: Yes, yes. I thought it would be a great tour, and so as time was winding down on the Joint Staff, I knew the guy who was the CO [commanding officer] down here. It was Colonel [P.J. Jones]. You know him, too.

ALLISON: Great F-4 pilot.

NYLAND: Great F-4 pilot, and before that, F-8. So I went to see General [Charles H.] Pitman, who was DCS [Deputy Chief of Staff] for Aviation in those days, and I got in there, and he started going, "What do you want?" And I said, "Well, I came up here to tell you that I'm the right guy to go down to Pensacola and take that command and fire up all these young studs about Marine aviation." And he looked at me, and he said, "Really? I'm sure glad you let me know that," and that was about the end of that. So I kept bugging -- Charlie Carr--he was the colonels' monitor, and I kept bugging Charlie for the next couple of months, "Hey, what do you know? Am I going to Pensacola?" I'd run into General Pitman and he said, "Oh, there's the guy who tells me he should be the CO in Pensacola." So I'm sitting down there in the Joint Staff. I guess it's probably somewhere around February or March in '90, and phone rings, it's Charlie Carr, and he says, "Pack your bags. Pitman says you're going to Pensacola." He told me one thing. He said, "Don't go down there and quit on me." I said, "It will never happened. Not in my vocabulary."

ALLISON: What was he thinking?

NYLAND: Oh, supposedly there have been some guys that have come down here and as soon as they got here started thinking about maybe I'll stay here.

ALLISON: Which meant retirement.

NYLAND: Yes, so it wasn't in my plan or my vocabulary and I told him that, so I came down here and the change of command was either June or July of 1990 and spent two magnificent years down there. In fact, it's kind of funny, we're doing the interview here in

the museum, which was just sort of getting -- it was much larger then, but it had just received all the stuff from the Cubi Point O Club.

ALLISON: Oh, really.

NYLAND: That was about halfway through my tour.

ALLISON: Oh, it's a great place.

NYLAND: Well, it was great, and I was really fortunate we had a wonderful team here. About the same time as I took over the MATSG, a guy named Rich Burns, "Smoke" Burns, took over the station, and about six months behind him came Admiral [John H.] "Jack" Fetterman, who took over CNET [Chief of Naval Aviation and Training], and the three of us just clicked so, I mean, it was the Navy-Marine Corps team at its finest. We had all these folks fired up, loving life, getting ready to fly orange and white airplanes and ultimately gray and green airplanes and it was a magnificent tour. The one shock I had I guess was we used to meet every Tuesday with all the new lieutenants and sometimes that'd be 10, sometimes it'd be 25. But, as I started doing that, and I always went through the record books first, I started seeing the sons of guys I'd flown in Vietnam with.

ALLISON: Really? That must have been poignant.

NYLAND: The clock is moving. I'm getting older.

It was a terrific tour, an opportunity to be around all these young people and help get them fired up about aviation, make sure they just stay focused on that and didn't worry about fitness reports and things like that. That would all fall in place. And my first sergeant, because MATSG didn't have a sergeant major in those days -- my first sergeant is now the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Sergeant Major [Carlton W.] Kent.

ALLISON: Kent, yes.

NYLAND: Magnificent. We ran together just about every day. We used to have a running program for the lieutenants that were waiting. I still have folks come up to me now, at the rank of lieutenant colonel, and they'll say, "You don't remember me, sir, but I still remember those runs." We'd run them out to the back gate, all over the base.

ALLISON: Now, these were new lieutenants just showing up from TBS [The Basic School].

NYLAND: Right.

ALLISON: And you would have a new crop in every week?

NYLAND: We kept them in platoons as they waited to start, if they were on a med-hold [medical hold] or some other thing. We'd form them all up -- I mean, they weren't down here on vacation, so we'd form them up and we'd run them and we had them doing other things. We signed them over to the Navy Aeromedical Research Lab, where they're trying to do some kind of things on what type of people make good aviators, or how do you see peripherally in certain scenarios. We had people doing things like that. It was just a great tour.

ALLISON: What are some of the challenges, sir, in running MATSG?

NYLAND: Well, I tell you, it was interesting, because actually I had the record books of all the Marines basically this side of the Mississippi River and over, so we had Marines, for instance, over in Panama City. We had Marines on exchange duty with the Air Force at Eglin [Air Force Base]. We had Marines in the Joint EOD [explosive ordnance disposal] school over at Eglin and obviously responsible for Pensacola proper, Whiting Field and also Meridian [Field].

ALLISON: It wasn't just new lieutenants coming in.

NYLAND: No, I had young Marines coming down here that were going to be aircrew swimmers. I had gunnery sergeants who were DIs [drill instructors] in the Navy AOC [aviation officer candidate] School, at their aviation candidate school. So we ran the gamut. We kept them up, in those days, about 1,100 record books, and now the command has over 3,000. So one of the things that I found effective for me was I elected not to become singularly qualified to instruct in anything and instead just tried to fly them all, which then gave me access to go to all of these places. So, for instance, I might go up to Whiting AFB and on Monday fly in the T-34s, then wander through the squadron and talk to the Marines up there. And maybe on Wednesday I'd fly the H-57 and I'd wander through the rotary-wing squadron down there, and then maybe we'd take an H-57, we'd go over to Eglin and visit the Marines at the EOD school, or we'd fly to Panama City and then I'd do the same here at mainside, hop into an A-4 or a T-2 and then go up to Meridian, so that I could get out and about and be visible and people know that there's somebody down here that's concerned about my progress, my welfare, and I've got a hold somewhere if I need help. And it turned out to be an effective way of doing it, to me. I enjoyed it. It got me a fair amount of flying time, but it also got me, more importantly, out in front of the Marines and the chance to make

sure they knew there was in fact a place, not just some phone number, but somebody cared about their progress.

ALLISON: When you would go fly, like, in an A-4 or something like that, were you flying with a student?

NYLAND: No, I would go and fly with an instructor, because I had not elected to become an instructor, because I thought that would limit me. If I was going to be an instructor, that's going to require you to stay current more so on the particular tactics or techniques, and then that would, by doing that, focus me into an area which then, if I was going to teach in the back seat of a T-39, I wouldn't be up at Whiting learning how to fly helicopters, flying in T-34s and seeing those other Marines. And so for me it was a conscious decision, not to really be a bona fide instructor in a particular segment of the training command. I figured my value was probably better spent on making sure they understood and leadership didn't stop just because you were 50 yards from the flagpole and that you must get out and see your people and talk to your people and see what's going on.

ALLISON: One thing I remember from going through Pensacola is you have a tendency as a Marine to sort of forget that you were in the Marine Corps until you start to see your hair grow a little bit, and you sort of lose touch with that dimension of yourself. And I remember checking out of MATSG, whoever was running it in those days told me to get a haircut before I showed up to Yuma.

NYLAND: Yes, I think that's another thing, I didn't want people to lose track of the fact that you're down here in the Naval Aviation Training Command, but you're still a Marine and have Marine standards. And, quite honestly, that was one of the reasons that we ran a couple times a week, because some of our lieutenants arrived looking, I knew, different than when they graduated Basic School. A couple too many Whoppers with cheese or whatever. And so I'd say, "You're a Marine 24 hours a day. You represent us. If people see you and they find out you're a Marine, you need to be representative of what the Marine standards are." First off, you ought to be proud of them anyway, and you do have a tendency, if you're a little bit away from the flagpole and you're busy, you're working hard, you're trying to learn, you're trying to prep for your flights and everything. But I think if you start now as a way of life, then that way of life continues for you. I mean, my daughter, about a year after I retired, called Brenda one day and said, "Is dad OK?" And Brenda said, "What do you mean?" And

Brandy said to her, "Well, his hair looks a little long, for him." So she knew what I should look like. It all comes around.

ALLISON: Did you have deals with any recruiting of pilots or anything like that? I mean, were you filling quotas? Did you have quotas you had to fill?

NYLAND: Yes, we had a good pipeline. We did not have any extensive pools anywhere. My philosophy was, if you're going to be hung up, be hung up before you start, but once you start, you've got to go straight through. And so when I was down here, we were putting our helicopters through, helicopter pilots in about 13 months, 13, 14 months. And the jet guys did about 18, 19 months. So we knew what the flow rate was going to be, and that's what headquarters programmed into us, and what we had for opportunities where there were going to be some downtime, then we tried to use that constructively to give them something they'd be able to use further down the line. Send them up to Memphis and send them to Aviation Maintenance Officer School, or send them off to admin school or adjutant school.

ALLISON: Just don't let them sit around.

NYLAND: Yes, not sit around, but do something that could be useful later in life. And I will tell you that what they have in place here now is magnificent. The last two COs have done an incredible job with taking huge burdens off the operating commanders by doing those kind of things, both with officers and enlisted. We didn't have any pooling of the enlisted in those days, because it was much smaller. Now, of course, since Memphis closed and all enlisted initial aviation training is here, these guys have done magnificent really getting them shipboard, firefighting quals, qual to drive a HMMWV [high mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicle]. We try to qual some to drive a bus, so when they arrive in the operating forces now, the commanders are loving what they get, and we try to do that with the officers. We were primarily focused on the officers and a much smaller young enlisted population going through. And it seemed to work out pretty well.

ALLISON: When did they close Memphis? When was that?

NYLAND: Let's see. I think Memphis closed in about -- the guy behind me did not have to deal with this, and that would be 2002, so it was probably about 2003.

ALLISON: It wasn't during your command, though?

NYLAND: Not during my command. I tried to stay for a third year. I tried to convince General Wills, who was DCS Aviation, that they really needed me there. He laughed out loud, they didn't really need me here.

ALLISON: They had a better deal for you. What about NFO [naval flight officer] training? Were you getting plenty of people to go into NFO? It seems like that's always been hard to fill all the NFO billets, right?

NYLAND: Actually, we had plenty of guys to go NFO, and that was also at a point when -- and I can't remember the exact name of the program, but we had opened up the aperture and we had quite a few young ground first lieutenants and/or fleet accession selects that came down here because we had opened up, ultimately, what was going to be the TACA/FACA [tactical air controller/airborne and forward air controller/airborne] role, and we were looking at it, and that wasn't the term that we used then, but we had a lot of young infantry and artillery officers that came down in that program, because of where the Marine Corps was headed at that time, and it might have been when we started getting more of the D model [F/A-18D] Hornet, I guess. We never really --

ALLISON: That was before the two-seater was coming in, wasn't it?

NYLAND: Because initially, you know, we got only the A models and they were single seat. In fact, I had to listen to that one question that young guy asked today, about wondering what do we do with the Joint Strike Fighter, F-35 single-seat airplane, what about the NFOs? And my thought in my mind was never say never because when they brought out that F-18A, they thought it would be single seats forever and within six years they realized the capability of the airplane. Two people make it work a lot better. And so I'm not sure I would ever say there will never be a two seat JSF. Time will tell. I mean, the computing power, the avionics, the technology, they're all magnificent. They're all magnificent when they work like they're supposed to. On the other hand, if the information you're supposed to get in a tenth of a second takes 10 and you're being shot at, should there be somebody else helping tweak that system or watch the inbound SAM [surface to air missile] or who knows? And all the mission sets and capabilities inherent in the airplane, in my mind, very easy to make the case that there ought to be two people in there.

ALLISON: Well, we've had such a benign environment here lately, maybe it's easy to get

lulled into this sense of security.

NYLAND: Well, I mean, we have a history of fighting the last war, and not too many guys are getting shot at in this one. It's far different than watching SAMs come up between your section in Vietnam and knowing the guys that were being put in Hanoi Hilton because of those SAMs and AAA [anti-aircraft artillery].

ALLISON: Makes you think.

NYLAND: So you have to be careful.

ALLISON: So the NFO pipeline kind of shut down, except for the ECMO [electronic countermeasures officer] going through, but then --

NYLAND: It was kind of coming back up.

ALLISON: Because the F-18 was coming in, the two-seater.

NYLAND: I want to say we were only putting through about 36 a year.

ALLISON: And they were all ECMOs.

NYLAND: Mostly you had to cover the ECMOs. The two-seat Hornet was just starting to be thought about, because while I was here, '90 to '92, in the summer of '91, I went over to Dallas and flew one last hop in the F-4, a 2 v 1. Before they took the Phantoms to the boneyard. And then that same summer is when I went out to the west coast and did my training in the Hornet, and I did it in a B model, waiting to get into the D model when I went on up to -- went up to Cherry Point. So I guess we probably had the two-seat Hornets maybe two, three years at that point, but we were, for some reason it sticks in my mind, making about 36 NFOs a year, split between Hornets and Prowlers. I'm not sure what the number is today, but it wasn't real large.

ALLISON: Did you have any NFO retreads coming through and going to a flight school. Would they come through your doors?

NYLAND: Yes, absolutely. They'd come down here and we had a few of those guys. In fact, some of them went on to have really good careers, squadron commanders of Hornets and so they all came back here, too. They have to go through API [aviation pre-flight indoctrination] again.

ALLISON: Oh, really? I bet they liked that.

NYLAND: And then we'd ship them off to Whiting Field and then they'd learn, flying T-34s like everybody else.

ALLISON: Start at the beginning. I guess they could talk on the radios better.

NYLAND: Yes, they don't have to worry about that part, but we had several that I can recall come through while I was down there, that came back to get their pilot wings.

ALLISON: OK, sir. Did you buy a house while you were down here?

NYLAND: Yes. When I got here, P.J. Jones was the CO, and when he had checked in, the Marine house wasn't available, and he owned a home here anyway, and he lived in the home. So when I got down here and the Marine house wasn't available right then, I said, well, I think I'll just buy a house because I need to be in the housing market anyway. I hadn't been in the market for several years and so we bought a house and we ended up keeping it for 15 years. Then when I retired, we decided to come back to Pensacola. Gutted it, changed everything we wanted to change in it, added two rooms, put in a pool for the grandkids.

ALLISON: Do you live there today?

NYLAND: Yes, that's where we are today.

ALLISON: That's kind of what Dave Barraclough did, too.

NYLAND: Yes "Cubby" [Barraclough], he's not far from me. He and Pablo Hayes [?]. Pablo's another old F-4 guy. Actually, [P.J. Jones] lives between me and [Cub]. So we've got a pretty good contingent of retired Marines down here. Hank Trimble, he's another F-4 guy down here. "Spud" Heinzerling is down here, Gary "Gracie" Elsten. There's quite a few, quite a few.

ALLISON: Nice place. I like the Southern feel, laid back.

NYLAND: Great community, nice people, nice pace of life, very, very comfortable here.

ALLISON: If it wasn't for those hurricanes.

NYLAND: Yes, well, when we bought our house here, there had not been one ashore directly in Pensacola for something like 48 years. While we were here, none. In '94, while I was at Cherry Point, one came ashore. We had no damage. There weren't any more again until 2004. Then we had that bad two-year period, '04, '05, and we haven't had any since. Now, I do have a generator and I start it every month just to keep all the bad weather away. It's kind of like the raincoat. Take it and you won't need it.

ALLISON: Any issues with women coming through? I guess you're getting some women aviators coming through at this time?

NYLAND: I think we were just beginning to get the first ones coming through and I think the numbers were really, really small, because it doesn't stand out in my mind.

ALLISON: But that's kind of when they began.

NYLAND: I'm relatively confident that we had a few, but the numbers would have been in the single-digit range.

ALLISON: Sarah Deal was the very first one, she went into CH-53s.

NYLAND: I think the Navy was ahead of us on that. We were planning for it, but I don't know that we had any in training while I was here. I'm thinking that we did not. I knew that the Navy had several up at Whiting, because of going up there, and we had started to think about it, but I just don't recall that we had any actually in training while I was here. I don't think so.

ALLISON: All right. Any particularly memorable events that occurred, good or bad?

NYLAND: Well, mostly I just remember the good, I guess, being the basic optimist. But I just remember it being a really rewarding tour, watching young people come down here and have a certain amount of trepidation when they started and then confidently going across that stage, whether as a pilot or an NFO or an air crewman and getting those wings and going out and having had the privilege and an opportunity to help influence that process. I remember we did have General [Carl E.] Mundy come visit, which was really terrific. We were having a lunch and he was going to speak at lunch. I forget who he was seated next to, the CO of the base, he and I were like brothers. He made some comments during the introduction and referred to me as "The Legend." I was pretty well known around Pensacola because we were pretty active, and the community was great. They welcomed us. I had a seat on the Chamber of Commerce. We used to go to the weekly business breakfast.

ALLISON: That's part of your job, too, is doing the community.

NYLAND: To me, it was. I mean, I'd go down there, here's what Marines do and why we're here and how we [bring], just like everybody else. So somewhere along the line, I got tagged with the name, "The Legend" or something. And, of course, the CO mentions that to General Mundy right before he gets ready to speak, and he said, "Well, I hadn't heard that before," he says, "but Spider will have the next day and a half to make that clear to me." And

Toddler – General William L. "Spider" Nyland, age 2 or 3 at Grandmother's house.

ROTC - Naval ROTC Midshipman 2d class cruise – summer 1966 in Corpus Christi
(L-R) Bill McMath, William Nyland, Steve Oder, Barry Knutson, Max McGee-all from University of New Mexico NROTC

Winged - Larry Kener, Capt Bob Butterworth, and William L. "Spider" Nyland at 'winging' ceremony – 12 Sept 1969

Vietnam – Spider stands next to a VMFA-314, F-4 Phantom aircraft, Chu Lai RVN, ca July 1970.

VMFA-232 - Spider, Commanding Officer, VMFA-232 in WetsPac (Iwakuni, Japan) ca Fall 1986

P'cola - Nyland on ladder of F-4 at Pensacola Naval Air Station when he commanded Marine Aviation Training Support Group 21, ca 1989

B-Day Ball – At the Marine Corps Birthday Ball, Pensacola, 1990, (l-r) General John R. Dailey and wife Mimi, Brenda Nyland (General Nyland's wife) and then Colonel Nyland

BG promo – Pinning on his first star at Cherry Point Officers' Club, 1994. (l-r) LtGen Robert Johnson, CG II MEF, General Nyland's mother, Ruth, General Nyland, Brenda -Nyland (wife), Brandy (daughter), Commander Hank Nyland, USN, (ret) (Gen Nyland's father)

2 star promo – General Nyland is promoted to major general in the theater at Headquarters, Marine Corps (Navy Annex), May 1996. (l-r) wife Brenda, daughters Leslie and Brandy, General Nyland, mother and father, Ruth and Hank Nyland

Taszar - Gen Nyland prepares to fly a combat sortie in an F/A-18 Hornet aircraft when Marine squadrons supported NATO's Operation Allied Force based at a former Soviet base at Taszar Hungary, 1999

Reception – Reception at Quarters #1, Marine Barracks, 8th & I, Washington, following General Nyland's promotion to general, September 2002. (l-r) daughter Brandy, father Hank, General Nyland, wife Brenda, daughter Leslie, mother Ruth

promo to 4 star – Commandant, General James L. Jones (back to camera), promotes William L. "Spider" Nyland to general, September 2002. Flanking General Nyland are his son, Matt (l) and father, Hank (r)

Iwo – Brenda and General Nyland stand at the Marine monument atop Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima in March 2004. General Nyland was the Marine rep for the annual battle commemorative event attended by both Americans and Japanese. General Nyland performed the re-enlistment ceremony for 20 Marines at this location.

Cobra – General Nyland in AH-1W Cobra helicopter at Bagram, Afghanistan, as he prepares to fly a mission in Afghanistan while serving as Assistant Commandant Marine Corps and making an official visit to Marine forces

General and Mrs. Nyland at his retirement ceremony, September 2015, at 8th & I

Spider sings "Marguerittaville" at the reception following his retirement, at 8th & I, accompanied by the CMC band, "Free Country"

Family – Nyland family gathering at Flounders restaurant in Pensacola, around the table left to right: granddaughter Riley, daughter Leslie, granddaughter Alexa, daughter-in-law Kirstin, son Matt, General Nyland, wife Brenda, daughter Brandy, son-in-law Ben Grant (Maj USMC), and grandson Logan

so the next time, after he left, I have a picture of him and I shaking hands and he sent it back it back, and he says, "To The Legend," and to this day he still refers to me that way.

ALLISON: He was taking over as Commandant at that time.

NYLAND: He was just taking over, because he was Commandant still when I was at 2nd MAW [Marine Aircraft Wing] and was selected for one star, because I'll never forget that phone call.

ALLISON: He told you?

NYLAND: Well, yes. He called. It was two nights before Christmas, December 23rd, and it was like about 9:00, 9:15 at night, and the phone rang. And the rumors were flying, the list is out, and I guess I was running in the rumor mills, which I didn't pay a whole lot of attention to, about 50-50 that I was on the list and not on the list. So the phone rings and Brenda's in with Brandy, putting her to bed, and I answered, "Good evening." or whatever and this voice says, "Is Brenda there?" And I said, "Just a moment." And the voice sounded -- I mean, I knew that voice. So I got Brenda and she got on the phone, and at first she thought it was a joke, because she thought it was somebody like Cajun [George Tullos] or somebody calling in there and so he said to her, "Brenda, this is Carl Mundy," and of course she says, "Well, hey, Carl Mundy, how are you doing?"

ALLISON: She was still thinking it was a joke.

NYLAND: Yes. About two minutes later she realized that it's not. And so then they have this about five or seven-minute conversation. And by then now it's clear to me that I had recognized the voice, it is General Mundy. So then all of a sudden she just hangs up and says, "Thanks." and hangs up the phone. And I said, "Well, is that General Mundy?" And she said, "Yes." and I said, "Well, what did he say?" She said, "Well, he said I should get up off the bed, wrap my arms around you, give you a kiss and tell you that you're going to be a brigadier general and see if you can smile any bigger than you already do." So I grabbed the phone and I called the command center, and I can't get through. I call and I can't get through. By now, I get through to the Commandant. I said, "Sir." He said, "Spider." He said, "Don't even say anything to me. You didn't recognize my voice." And then he said, "I know you just want to call me and give me some speech that you've rehearsed, all about this honor and how glad you are to be a general." And I said, "Sir, all I want to say is thank you for the

privilege and the confidence." Then he talked to me after that, but he was -- what a magnificent man. So those two events are among many that I treasure with General Mundy.

ALLISON: Was that your first consideration, the first look?

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: You made it on the first look, and you were the first NFO [naval flight officer] to get a star.

NYLAND: Right, yes.

ALLISON: That's something.

NYLAND: Well, I was very blessed and fortunate. Certainly there were an awful lot of guys in front of me that were equally or more capable, but for whatever reason it ended up being me and I was privileged and blessed and enjoy it and love it.

ALLISON: Well deserved.

NYLAND: You're too kind. Other than that, it was just the memories of the tour were just fantastic, being around the young folks kept you young, kept me in shape, for sure, because I didn't want any of them to outrun me. Just the friendships that we had I think with Admiral Fetterman and Captain Burns, too, it was sort of -- I was talking with Mrs. Fetterman, who still lives here, last night, and she described it as a magical time, which it really was, both on the installation and out in town because we were all active with the same people and doing the same things and it was really terrific.

ALLISON: Did this change your perception of the Navy in any way? I mean, there's always this Navy-Marine Corps relationship. Some people see it as an adversarial relationship, others people don't. Did it change yours in any way?

NYLAND: I don't think so, because I think I always believed in and saw the value of the Navy-Marine Corps team. Now, recognize that my dad was career Navy. Both my grandfathers were career Navy, and two uncles. In my mind, what the Navy-Marine team brings to the nation was very special and very unique. Did we have issues that we had to work our way through? You bet. But I always thought it was well worth whatever discussion and finding accommodations for the way ahead, because I believed then and I believe today that nobody, nobody, and no other service, offers this nation, and particularly as we see the threat developing, what the Navy and Marine Corps team offers. I'm disappointed that we aren't able in some fashion to better articulate that to OSD [Office of the

Secretary of Defense] to the point that we would break away from the old funding paradigm of, one-third for the Department of Navy, one-third for the Department of Army and one-third to the Department of Air Force.

ALLISON: And they're still discussing that?

NYLAND: I mean, plus or minus one or two percent. It's been like that forever, and each of those two services do great things for our nation, have great things to offer. But, in my mind, the truth is, forward-deployed, out there meeting people, training with people, whether it's as small as a mobile training team or a platoon or a company, small boats, what the Navy-Marine Corps team brings with sustained deployed capability is huge for this nation and does not receive the kind of funding that it ought to, to ensure that it's as robust as it could be, in my opinion.

ALLISON: One other question on MATSG. Were you involved -- did you get involved in the aircraft selection process, as these young guys are in competition? That's at their final squadron, I would guess.

NYLAND: Yes, I stayed out of that. It wasn't my place to enter late and get in that process, I didn't think, so that was handled at Whiting or at Meridian, or down here at main side, for the NFOs that were going to go into either the Prowler or the Hornet. So I did not insert myself in that process. I figured the commanders of those squadrons, they dealt directly with Headquarters Marine Corps and they knew what the needs were, and let them figure that out, so I stayed out of that process. I didn't try to get in their business.

ALLISON: OK, sir, anything else on MATSG?

NYLAND: I can't think of anything. It was just a great tour.

ALLISON: All right. Did you have any ideas about where you wanted to go from there, or were you just going to leave it up to the desires of the Marines?

NYLAND: Well, I figured I'd go where the Marine Corps wanted me, and then when [Jefferson D.] “Beak” Howell took over 2nd MAW and he called me one day and said, "Why don't you come up here and be my chief of staff." And I said, "Sir, I'd love to do that. I'm now checked out in the Hornet. I can come up there and be more than happy to do that and work with you again. It would be a great pleasure and privilege, as it has been over all the other tours we did together." So the next thing I knew, I had orders to go up there and had my change of command. He had told me right away -- he said, it doesn't look like I'm going

to have an AWC [assistant wing commander], so I'll probably make you AWC at some point, but you've got to come up here first as chief, but you're going to live in the AWC's house. Now, as it turned out, he was living in the AWC's house as they rehabbed and fixed up the commanding general's house, so I left Brenda and Brandy with her mom in Montgomery, Alabama, Prattville, Alabama, and went on up to Cherry Point, which actually worked out to be a good thing. Because for the six weeks that I was there alone, I could work 14, 15, 16 hours, order a pizza and keep going, which really allowed me to go through -- when you go somewhere new, you like to go through everything that's in their drawer, understand the history behind that, go through all the documentation that exists for SOPs [standard operating procedures] and orders. So while I missed them, it was an incredibly strong opportunity to get off to a running start at the Wing. So I ate a lot of pizza, stayed in that office and looked through things and figured it out and then settled into the job and came back down here and got them moved into the house, and they loved that. On the 10th of November, 1992, he said, "You are now the assistant wing commander, as well," and as only Beak could say, "Don't screw it up." So I still have the special order, wing special order, dated 10 November, 1992.

ALLISON: When did you get down there initially?

NYLAND: I was there, I think I had my change of command down here, it was like the last week in June, I want to say, and I was up there just after the 4th of July. I mean, I highballed it up there and went right to work.

ALLISON: Any other marching orders from General Howell, besides don't screw it up?

NYLAND: Well, that was when they got the -- you see, when I got up there the first time, he said, "You know me, Spider. You've worked with me enough times." He said, "You jump in there and start doing what you do," which Beak had always done for me. He'd always let me run. If I needed to get a little rein, he'd give me a little light rein, or if he needed to pull on both reins, he'd pull on them. And we already had that kind of a relationship that I just sort of settled right in and we just took over the staff meetings and started maneuvering the staff and dealing with the commanders on his behalf, and giving him the time to do what he wanted to do, which was get out and about and see the Marines, go down there, get on their hangar decks and talk to them and fly airplanes. And so we settled into a routine pretty quickly, and then when he made me assistant wing commander, then we

started looking for a chief and ultimately brought a chief in, and then I became AWC only. But there was a period of time there -- I guess I'd have to look back in my notes. Maybe it's in there. But I think I was probably dual-hatted for probably four to six months, maybe even a shade longer before we got a chief in there, as well. But it was terrific, a great opportunity, time to learn again.

ALLISON: You mean things were changing as far as what things were being done in Marine aviation?

NYLAND: Wing aviation was changing. We were looking at what are we going to do. We're starting to look at, were we going to keep the HAWK missiles or not keep the HAWKs. We were starting to get much more involved in UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles], because they were actually coming back from the division and the artillery side of the house and back to aviation. We were starting to tinker with the JFACC [joint forces air component commander] thing. What did that mean to Marine aviation? We had the omnibus agreement that General [P.X.] Kelley had negotiated, but now the JFACC, CFACC [combined forces air component commander], the system that drove JFACC, was coming online and there was just a lot of change. So there was how do we fit into that? What's our niche? What should Marine aviation be doing? And we put together for the first time a G-7 that helped us with our exercises and training and things where we wanted to focus. And when General Howell left and General [John E.] Rhodes came in, that continued.

ALLISON: What about the JFACC thing? Could you elaborate on that, some of the developments in that regard? And I believe you served as the JFACC in a number of places.

NYLAND: Well, we started -- I think the Marine Corps initially I would say, sort of gave the JFACC idea the Heisman [Trophy] treatment, one hand out, stay away from me. We were very slow to embrace jointness. We were very slow to embrace JFACC, which ultimately we did, but we like to make sure we're on the right road before we pull up all the anchors behind us. But the JFACC thing really was done to gain momentum and we were usually providing folks to some of the different staffs. The JTFEx [joint task force exercise] actually was really with the 2d Fleet, was usually the final exercise for the carriers that were going, and they always had a JFACC aboard, sometimes aboard the carriers. We would provide people into those. And then about 1994, I was selected and went to the JFACC course, which was a week long, and I think this was -- I bet they hadn't done five of them,

and I went down to Maxwell [Air Force Base] and completed that course and came home on a Saturday, and we had already deployed part of the Wing down to an exercise in El Paso called Roving Sands, which was largely an air defense exercise and brought in coalition partners and surface-to-air weaponry and aviation together, and there was a JFACC role to be played down there and the 2d MAW had been signed up to be the JFACC for the first week while forces arrived and then turn it over to 8th Air Force. So at that point, Edward R. "Ed" Langston was the chief of staff for the Wing and he went down there and the week I was in JFACC school, he was down there actually putting things into work and into practice. I got home on Saturday afternoon from JFACC school, Sunday morning hopped in the Hornet, flew to El Paso and Sunday night I was the JFACC. So trial by fire, and so we were the JFACC for about four days, and then we turned it over to Lieutenant General Steve Croker, who is a very good friend, even to this day, when he arrived with 8th Air Force. And I think that's the first time that there was ever a transition of a JFACC from one service to another like that, and it was very crude and very rudimentary, which is interesting because it came to pass farther down the road, when I was the commanding general of 2d MAW, we did it again, much more differently and much more large scale, but that's a story for another session, I guess. But it was a tremendous learning experience for me, and less than two months later I found myself as the JFACC on the [USS] Mt Whitney [LCC 20] for one of these JTFEx exercises. And so I had gotten up there. I had that in my background. I had gone up to Norfolk and met with CarGru 4 [Carrier Group 4], which were the training gurus and they had been doing JFACC business and went to a couple of days of training with them before we actually embarked. And then, now, there I am. I'm on the Mt Whitney and then Vice Admiral Jay Johnson, later to be CNO [Chief of Naval Operations], was commander of 2d Fleet and that was his flagship, so I was on his staff as the JFACC. And his deputy was major general then -- I think major general, not lieutenant general yet, [John M.] "Jack" Keane [USA], who had come over from 18th Airborne Corps, and he was later vice Chief of Staff of the Army. So, I mean, you can see how these great relationships continue to grow, because all three of us then ended up in Washington together. But that was a wonderful experience, and, once again, Admiral Johnson, in many ways a lot like General Howell, kind of let me just go with it, and then if I needed to be reined or moved, he would do that. We had a wonderful exercise. I learned a heck of a lot, and one of them that was really, really

good learning involved a very high paced VID [visual identification] drill, that had to have a visual identification before shooting. And I'll never forget, what was brought home to me more than anything else in that role, because I felt like I was under the clock and under the gun, and we had the lawyers in there, because it was ROE [rules of engagement] intensive. And I remember working my way through this problem. It seemed like it took quite a while, but I know in retrospect it was only about seven to 10 minutes long, but just having reaffirmed for me, lawyers can only advise you on ROE. They don't make ROE decisions. It's the commander that has to make that decision, and it stuck with me from that day, more prominently than ever before, because having to make the decision to let this event -- I think it was a shoot down off a VID or whatever it was -- occur or not occur. But a wonderful learning experience, and I took a bunch of guys off the 2d MAW staff that had been with me at Roving Sands and we had a pretty good capability to learn and how to operate and do JFACC business, which if you turn the clock back to when I first got to the Wing, summer of '92 to summer '94, we had not only gone from the Heisman, we'd gone to sumo wrestling and wrapped arms around it and said, "We can do this."

ALLISON: That's kind of the Marine Corps way. Either don't do it at all or go full bore.

NYLAND: Go full bore and do it right, and we did. And we started great training programs, and it was terrific. Being AWC for General Howell and then for General Rhodes, both of them very much the same in letting me grow and learn, particularly after I made one star, to be able to flourish in that kind of environment. It was terrific.

ALLISON: In the JFACC world, when you're talking about being a JFACC, the air forces, that would include the U.S. Air Force?

NYLAND: Absolutely. It was joint and coalition. I think we had some Aussies, and we might have had a German or two and we had boatloads of Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine. We had some Coast Guard folks. So, absolutely, these -- the JTFEx series were a wonderful series. It was always good learning experiences and always a good time, because of the good people.

ALLISON: And you had Army air in there, too, did you say that?

NYLAND: We didn't have any Army air, but we had the Army's missile defense command guys in there, because, as the JFACC, one of your other roles oftentimes is the area air defense coordinator, and so we had a team in there that came from the Army Missile

Defense Command that helped us integrate what that surface-to-air piece would look like, helped us with our airspace coordination orders, our [skins], so absolutely, Army as well.

ALLISON: I've found that the Army air is not joint.

NYLAND: The Army air was not deploying heavily in those exercises, and I think that's primarily because in the early stages and I think we're still even, to this day, experimenting with how do you put rotary wing on the ATO [air tasking order], and so their AAMDC [Army Air and Missile Defense Command] was important, obviously. General Jack Keane was the deputy of the JTF, and we had a great -- I'll never forget, a great, great Army colonel, artillery officer, who was the fires coordinator for me. I mean, he was magnificent, and so a lot of joint, but I think because at that point, that ATO was still very, very focused on fixed-wing assets, that there was not a lot of play on even the Navy and Marine role, let alone the Army, as the exercise unfolded.

ALLISON: And there's always the controversy with Marine tacair [tactical aviation] and Air Force tacair in the command and control situations. Do you remember how you dealt with that, or were there any issues?

NYLAND: No, I think we -- again, I'm one of those guys that believes that's why you have to talk to people eyeball to eyeball and sort those things out. We put together our airspace coordination and the GAT, guidance and targeting cell, and the strategy and planning guys. We didn't have any issues with that. We had to understand what each other was looking for and we knew that the Marines wanted their air to come to the Marines. On the other hand, that was one of the first times as a JTF when we decided that the joint force commander, Lieutenant General Buck Kernan in this case, one level even above, would keep certain aviation assets, like electronic attack. So we just worked our way through it, and the Marines would send up their proportionate response and if they had excess sorties, they would go wherever they wanted. If Air Force had excess sorties, they could go into the Marine business, or shaping the battlefield. But I guess we saw that in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

ALLISON: It worked really well.

NYLAND: I know the relationship between [T. Michael] “Buzz” Moseley [USAF] and [James F.] “Jim” Amos and [James T.] “Jim” Conway, worked like a championship team, and it was because they had done this on the west coast. They had all sat down, they had all

walked their way through it. They'd worked it out. And I think it wasn't an issue, and I don't remember having any kind of bad afternoon or hair pulling or knock-down, drag-out of any kind over any of the apportionments that we ever put together. And that's a tribute, I think, to the great folks that we had putting it all together. They came there to make this work. We wanted this exercise to be a good, meaningful exercise and we made it work, and we had good people trying to do the right thing, which is one of the beauties of joint.

ALLISON: OK, sir. Thank you very much. That's interesting how that worked out.

NYLAND: It was neat. I learned a lot. I enjoyed it, and, like I said, later on in life I got to do that again when I was the commanding general there, second launch.

ALLISON: OK, we'll talk about that. You had mentioned air defense and whether to keep the HAWKs or not. Could you talk about that issue- the HAWKs were later cut, but air defense is one of the functions of Marine aviation.

NYLAND: Well, it is, and that was a tough decision. And, of course, the wing had one battalion and that was a HAWK battalion and the LAAD [low altitude air defense] battalion. But great capability, but aging and a huge footprint. Those were the things, I think, at the point that this was happening, this is one of the first times when the Marine Corps was looking at it would have all the right bases in the right spaces and doing the things that we need to focus on if we're short in some of those areas. And so HAWK, I think because we had an agreement with the Army, through the Army and even active-duty, Reserve or Guard, to have that surface-to-air capability provided, if we had to go and we didn't have it, and so we looked pretty hard at that and the ultimate decision at that point was to stick with the close in, with the LAAD guys, that we would take with us because they're pretty expeditionary, pretty small footprint, and that we would walk away from the HAWK, given the assurances of this agreement with the Army, that we would be able to get medium-range surface-to-air capability for airfield or area protection. Hard, hard on people. Change is hard. Folks that had particular skills that have to be now moved into something else, many of them easy cross-trains, some of them not so. It was always a tough thing, but we made the decision. We didn't make the decision. We tried to provide our input and this is what we thought and how it would work and Headquarters Marine Corps made the decision. I'd have to look in a command chronology or some history and find out exactly when we stood down

that HAWK battalion, but I do believe it was while I was there as AWC, but it's blurry, on the date.

ALLISON: But the Army, they had the Patriots. Is that the --

NYLAND: But they had the HAWK, too.

ALLISON: Oh, they had the HAWK.

NYLAND: In fact, they had more HAWKs than we did, and as I recall, they were either active or Guard, not that much in Reserve. Because I think their Reserve, at that point they had sort of restructured their Reserve to be combat support, combat service support, and so we had this agreement and the guys at headquarters looked at it, they evaluated what we sent in from the field and the decision was made, we're going to go this way, so we saluted smartly and executed.

ALLISON: The LAAD – they were using the [FM-92] Stingers at that time?

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: And they were part of the wing. Had to be part of the wing.

NYLAND: Yes, so in the wing you had two battalions in those days, the HAWK battalion and the LAAD battalion.

ALLISON: Were they part of the control group?

NYLAND: They were. Both the HAWKs and the LAAD and the guys were in the control group, MACG [Marine air control group]. And then the MWSG [Marine wing support group] had the four MWSS, Marine wing support squadrons.

ALLISON: That was kind of a new concept, too. That had come in --

NYLAND: That had evolved over time. A lot of stuff changed, but MWSG, I believe to this day that there are two things that made Marine aviation unique, and they are the MWSG, which gives us that expeditionary airfield and that capability and our Marine air command and control group, which allows us to plug into the joint fight. And the MWSG is probably one of the more thoughtful reorganizations that ever was done. It was an awful lot of work, which I didn't either know or appreciate until later in life that had been done at Headquarters on how that all came together. And then, having the privilege of being an assistant wing command and air wing commander and having the capabilities resident in that MWSG and in that MACG, terrifically smart, forward-thinking guys who put that organization together.

ALLISON: Do you know who? Do you have any names or personalities?

NYLAND: I really don't. Rich Holihan probably could tell you.

ALLISON: Holihan?

NYLAND: He's a retired Marine colonel, great American. He was here with me when I was AWC and had the support group and then he and I did a bunch of work over in Norway together, doing a couple of exercises over there.

ALLISON: But he was the MWSG guy?

NYLAND: Yes, and he's still in the DC area and he's been in it a long, long time. He'd be a great guy to put an oral history on him, MWSG [Marine wing support group]. I'll tell you, it would be a valuable thing for Marine aviation.

ALLISON: OK.

NYLAND: I'll give you his number, afterwards. I've got it in a phone somewhere.

ALLISON: OK, all right.

NYLAND: Anyway, that's the support group and the support squadrons were absolutely terrific and we got to see that in spades, as well, when I was the CG and when we sent two squadrons to Taszar, Hungary.

ALLISON: I want to hear about that.

NYLAND: Yes, well, we'll get to that one.

ALLISON: That's one of my favorite stories.

NYLAND: Yes, it was terrific.

ALLISON: Allied Force. All right, and you had mentioned UAVs coming over from the artillery.

NYLAND: Yes, we had the UAVs, and when the decision was finally made up at Headquarters that there was enough problems with it from an air vehicle standpoint, not necessarily from how do you use the information or get the information back, but from an air vehicle standpoint, particularly engine noise and motor. The decision was made to bring them back into the wing and so that we could use the kind of resident expertise that we had down in the H&MS [headquarters and maintenance squadrons] and MALs [Marine aviation and logistics squadrons] to help with sort of aviation maintenance of the little birds. Now, granted, they had their own maintenance department and everything, but there were some extra pieces there that we thought could help. Let's see if we can do better with the engines, do better structurally, if you bring one back and land it hard or whatever. And so it was --

I'm trying to recall, but I think that was when -- I think General [Harold W. "Harry"] Blot was DCS [Deputy Chief of Staff] Aviation when we brought the UAVs back into the wing.

ALLISON: Stood up the VMUs [Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle squadron].

NYLAND: The VMUs, right.

ALLISON: What kind of UAVs were they flying then?

NYLAND: The same ones we're flying today. [AAI RQ-2] Pioneers. They were much newer, much younger at that point, and of course the Navy was flying them, too. The Navy had Pioneer capabilities on the battleships, those that were still sailing, and then you had them on some of those other vessels, and of other vessels, and of course we had them with the MEUs [Marine expeditionary units]. I'm pretty sure it was about that timeframe that they came back to the wing.

ALLISON: And you had some old [VMFA-] 212 hands running some of those squadrons at that time, didn't you? Didn't you have John Graham, "Pagan?"

NYLAND: We had John Graham down there, and out on the west coast, Dan "Spartan" Driscoll was running a squadron, VMFA(AW)-242.

ALLISON: He had [VMFA(AW)-] 242?

NYLAND: He had 242. Also [Robert E.] "Rooster" Schmidle wasn't in 212, but he was another one of that era. He had [VMFA-] 251 and we had Jim Amos, who had been in Hawaii, but was, as you recall in those days, he was the CO [commanding officer] of MABs [Marine air base squadron].

ALLISON: Was he?

NYLAND: That was the second tour, I guess.

ALLISON: I don't remember him ever being in Hawaii.

NYLAND: I guess he had MABs when I had [VMFA-] 232, and then went over to become XO [executive officer] of 212, but, anyway, he's a former 212 guy that ended up having [VMFA-] 312 and then, later on in life, took over MAG-31 [Marine air group]. George Tullos, he had [VMFAT-] 101. In fact, he fam'd [familiarization] me in the two seat Hornet.

ALLISON: Oh, really?

NYLAND: And got my last quals on a three-day cross-country and he worked me like a dog.

ALLISON: Did he?

NYLAND: Because he was so good at them. I went out there and did my CAT 4 while I was at MATSG in the summer of '91, or spring of '92, before I left. Yes, we had Robert "Dog" Maddocks was up in the G-3 when Beak had the Wing, another 212'er.

ALLISON: Then he went on to take the MAG-31.

NYLAND: Yes. Who else was from 212?

ALLISON: Sidney Meade "Spit?"

NYLAND: Yes, Sid Meade, later took MALS-31 down there. I retired Sid Meade.

ALLISON: Oh, you did?

NYLAND: Yeah.

ALLISON: Where does he now live?

NYLAND: He lives in Kansas. None of his brothers and sisters would go back there and run that ranch, that farm that his dad had, so he went back. He was going to do it for a little while. He's still doing it.

ALLISON: Is that right? Farmers are making big money now. That's great. That's quite a collection of personalities there.

NYLAND: I'll tell you, it was huge, the number of people that came out of that relatively small F-4 community that went on to do some pretty special things for the Marine Corps.

ALLISON: I guess MAWTS [Marine Aviation and Weapons Training Squadron 1] was still being well supported.

NYLAND: Well, we'd have the planning conference every year, or two a year, and we supported it heavily from 2d MAW and two classes a year, one in the spring, one in the fall. A lot of work in those days with a provisional MAG there, MAG-40, doing an awful lot of work with exercises in Europe.

When I first got to 2d MAW, it actually had a commander and over time we transitioned it into a capability that we would take out of MAG-14, augmented by the wing staff and the other air group, because we couldn't afford the overhead of another command structure and we didn't have the colonels, either. But we participated in a lot of exercises in Norway in those days, Evennes and Booda, and places like that.

ALLISON: And then the thing in Southeast Europe was cranking up, too, Bosnia?

NYLAND: Well, that was the second time.

ALLISON: That's when you had the Wing?

NYLAND: And I was back here. I took the Wing in the summer of '98 and I left the Wing as the AWC in the winter of '95, when I went up to the Joint Staff, which was another story in and of itself.

ALLISON: We'll cover that some other time.

NYLAND: But 2nd MAW, as AWC and chief, it was a busy time. It was a good time, we seemed to go on the road and do wing-level exercises more then. When I was the Wing CG, we did a couple things. I remember, when I came up here to check in with General Howell, they were in the field, and by the time I came up here, we were on our way to Puerto Rico and we were in the field down there for like two weeks. Wing level, taking all the junk and I guess that's probably a function of dollars over time and lift between the two of them making it more difficult. But it was a good time, it was busy, but doing good things, good people.

ALLISON: How was the Harrier doing then? How was safety, aviation safety?

NYLAND: Harrier was going through a little bit of a rough time then. We sadly crashed -- well, too many, anyway. I can't remember how many. There were some issues at that point with the engine coming apart. That was before we'd really gotten in there and tightened that thing up, which, by the time I was CG at 2d MAW, then they were doing terrific. Of course, now that we've gotten into the [AN/AAQ-28V] Litening pod and everything, they're a huge force multiplier, but those were still some kind of tough days, fan blade issues, bearing issues. We had a couple other kinds of things, but I can't remember if they were software or mechanical. I would say that in the two and one-half years that I was there as the AWC chief -- I guess three and one-half years -- we probably lost maybe six or eight, so we were still learning some things.

ALLISON: I thought -- John Ditto wasn't one of them, was he?

NYLAND: John Ditto lost his airplane and life before I got there. He'd been the G-3, as a matter of fact. He was the G-3 when that happened, I believe.

ALLISON: That was under [William R.] Maloney, I believe.

NYLAND: Could be. I don't know. I know it had already happened because I know that we'd already had the dedication of the hall at Yuma as Ditto Hall, so it was some time after you and I came back from WestPac in 212. As you recall, John Ditto had VMA-211 out there. He came back and then colonel. I believe he was the wing G-3 when he had his

mishap, so that would put it somewhere between that window of '84 and '92. Maybe earlier than that. We came back from WestPac in '76, so '76 to '92.

ALLISON: When I was in, it was in '80.

NYLAND: '76 to '80. So '80, '92, somewhere in there.

ALLISON: OK, sir. Any comments on supporting the floats, any memorable MEUs that went out with 2d Wing ACEs [aviation combat elements] on them, involved in any particular --

NYLAND: Well, I remember on one of them -- all of them, we worked pretty hard to get everybody ready for that, but I do recall one where we sent the MEU out and then we subsequently augmented it with [Thomas L.] "Stash" Conant, who's now Major General Tom Conant and a bunch more Cobras to go to Somalia. I remember that in particular because once we got all the airplanes over there, almost immediately we had problems with the blades. And so we had to do all the inspections and what good blades we had, we had to make sure we got them over there for the Somali piece. And I remember the guys that had the MEUs, Jan Hulyand [Matthew E.] "Matt" Broderick, all those guys, many of them went on to become general officers.

ALLISON: General [Michael W.] Hagee was involved in one of those, I believe.

NYLAND: He was a west coast MEU. So I remember our guys, but I don't think we had anything untoward or unusual that I remember. I do remember the great opportunity to, as the AWC, to fly to visit the MEUs. I'd go to Israel or Rota [Spain] or places where they were training and visit with the MEUs a little bit. I visited more when I was at II MEF [Marine Expeditionary Force], but -- I don't think there was anything in particular that stood out. I guess the other thing we did then was we did bring the Reserve [Grumman EA-6B] Prowler squadron, VMAQ-4. They became the Seahawks, came out of Whidbey Island, where it was a Reserve squadron and we made it an active-duty squadron there at Cherry Point. We also stood down MAG-32 while I was there, when the Harrier MAG stood down and we merged everything into MAG-14.

ALLISON: So there had been two fixed-wing MAGs before that time?

NYLAND: Yes, 14 and 32. So we stood down the Bumblebees, VMA-331 [Marine Attack Squadron 331]. We stood them down and then sometime after that we stood down

MAG-32, and about the same time as we also converted H&MS to MALS, so that was going on.

ALLISON: Now, what was the thinking on that? Do you know why they decided to do that?

NYLAND: No, I think part of it was we were running out of [Douglas] A-4s [Skyhawk] and we didn't think that there was necessarily a reason to keep an airplane in the headquarters and maintenance squadron. Part of it had to do I think with our new logistics concepts and that's the Marine aviation logistics support program. So it was a combination of all of those things I think that kind of led to the MALS, and more of a focus, not just headquarters, but particularly that maintenance and supply and support side of it. And so MAG-14 was and remains today a huge span of control, which took some getting used to. It was -- you used to have an air group that had the training squadron, plus four squadrons, and it was quite busy. Now you just gave that to another air group who had four Prowler squadrons, had two KC-130 squadrons, because then we still had VMGRT-253 [Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Training Squadron 253] was still a going concern, with six to eight airplanes of its own. So that had been really [proved] and --

ALLISON: So they all went into MAG-14.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: All of that. I didn't realize that. Was that just to save infrastructure?

NYLAND: Infrastructure savings and, in fact, it took us a while to figure out how much of that could actually be savings, because obviously you had to grow that group headquarters. And, in fact, given the span of control, I could have easily made the case that you should have had a colonel as the XO, as well, because they've got enough places to go and people to see and make sure things stay --

ALLISON: That's a prestigious MAG, if you get MAG-14.

NYLAND: Oh, yeah, that's the big one.

ALLISON: You've got something. What's your take on the MALSPs [Marine Aviation Logistics Support Program] and the new logistics program, the new aviation supply?

NYLAND: I think we're doing really well. I think we're focused in the right places and, again, we can talk a little bit about MALSP and the rest and some of those other things that we were able to use when I had the Wing and we put those Hornets into Taszar. I think our

aviation logistics guys have done a wonderful job and continue to do so, and the maintenance and the supply and the viability of our airplanes. I think they're focused. They've made some great changes across the years that have led to more effectiveness, more efficiencies. They do good work. They did good work.

ALLISON: OK, sir. Well, anything else on your time as 2d MAW, AWC or chief of staff?

NYLAND: It was a great tour, like I said. I served both General Howell and General Rhodes. I learned a lot, continued to grow professionally, I think, actually thought I would stay there at least until the summer of '96, and instead got nabbed up on short notice to go into Washington and go to the J-8.

ALLISON: You didn't particularly care for that?

NYLAND: No, I was perfectly happy being AWC. As with everything, it turned out to be a wonderful opportunity and I learned a lot, and when I left there I was certainly better prepared to be a wing commander or a deputy commander at the MEF, and I did both after that. So while I was more than happy to stay flying airplanes and hanging around Cherry Point, the Marine Corps had another need for me. I went up there and I was better for it. I learned a lot. It was a great tour. I didn't particularly like moving right around Thanksgiving. It was a quick shot, but that's OK, it worked out, and away I went. I went up there, I got a call and the Manpower guy said, "You need to come up here and interview for this job in the J-8?"

ALLISON: You were still a brigadier.

NYLAND: I'm a one star, and it was a one-star billet. It was the DDFSR, deputy director for force structure and resources. I said, "Well, why me?" And he said, "Well, the job needs to understand how the Hill works, needs to have a money background and needs to be previously joint," and so I said, "OK." Because I had already done that. I'd been congressional liaison for General Bill Fitch, and I'd been his bag man and money man --

ALLISON: Now there's an interesting guy.

NYLAND: So I go up there, and when I get there, they say, "Oh, just go down and do the interview. It's really pro forma, everybody has to nominate. They've already interviewed the Air Force guy. They love him, he's going to get the job." So I said, "OK, good." I went down there and I interviewed with the J-8 and he's a great guy, Navy submariner. Then they

have me go interview with the director of the Joint Staff, [Walter] “Walt” Kross, Air Force three star. And then I had to go see the vice chairman, who was Admiral [William] “Bill” Owens, 5:30 in the morning appointment for my interview. So we get all done and I thought all of them went fine and I headed on home, thinking, OK, that's behind me. I'll go back to business here on Monday morning. Well, I come in there Monday morning, open up my computer and there's a note from the Commandant, saying, congratulations, you've been selected and they want you yesterday. So all of a sudden the wheels started spinning. That was followed immediately by a note from General [Charles E.] Wilhelm -- who was CG, II MEF and Commander of MarForLant, saying, congratulations, you're going, you'll be good for the job.

ALLISON: And that was right around Thanksgiving.

NYLAND: Yes, and I was there at work on I think Monday, either the 4th or 5th of December. And I had to move out of my house and I put Brenda and Brandy in the guest house at Cherry Point so she could at least get to stay in school until Christmas break. She was a junior in high school. That was traumatic for her, and so Brenda and I took one trip up there. Bad time of year to look for a house. There were only 12 of them on the market. There were only about three of them that we'd even rent, and fortunately one of them came through. So I got up there and I got the household goods delivered on a Saturday, pushed them all around the house and went to work, and over Christmas, went down, picked them up and brought them up to their new home.

ALLISON: That would have been late '94, right?

NYLAND: It was '95, going into '96.

ALLISON: Going into '96, OK. Well, I'm looking forward to hearing that next time.

NYLAND: All right. You'll have to remind me to tell you about the blizzard of '96, which was a great welcome.

END OF SESSION V

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee:	General William L. “Spider” Nyland, USMC
Date:	7 January 2010
Location:	Arlington, VA
Interviewer:	Dr. Fred Allison,
	Historian USMC History Division

SESSION VI

ALLISON: This is the sixth session of a career interview with General Spider **NYLAND**. Today is 7 January 2010 and we are doing this interview at the Pancake House in Arlington, Virginia. It’s a little noisy. We were going to talk today about Marine tactical aviation in Southeast Europe in the mid-1990s. Do you recall how Marine aviation got involved in that? General **NYLAND** was at 2d Marine Aircraft Wing at the time as chief of staff and assistant wing commander.

NYLAND: The thing that always came to us was, and the sequence is not as clear, probably, as it should be -- I guess the first people that we put in were the Prowlers, word came down and reached the Prowlers. Of course, the Navy had a couple of land-based squadrons, but we had the bulk, and the Air Force knew we were deployable and ready. Once again, when they called, within short order we had them airborne and they were on their way and it was their mission within a couple of days of getting on the ground.

ALLISON: One thing I noticed was the thing kicks off in March, but they had called for the Prowlers a month before, so I guess they were just anticipating something there.

NYLAND: Well, I suspect that they -- again, I don't know what was going up at the DC level and with SACEur [Supreme Allied Command Europe] and all of that, but I think everybody was pretty well attuned to the fact that they had surface-to-air weapons that were pretty capable. It made good sense to use SEAD [suppression of enemy air defense] and use the Prowlers for that. I think because we had the four squadrons at Cherry Point and it was a

logical time to roll them up and get them over there. I forget which one was first. It might have been the Moon Dogs, VMAQ-3 I think.

ALLISON: Q-3?

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: If I'm reading that correctly, it looked like Q-3 went over there and then the other squadrons reinforced them, and Q-3 was like the nucleus and then they kind of came in and reinforced them.

NYLAND: I think what we ended up doing was, once we got there and understood what the ops requirements were, they became sort of the super squadron and got whatever they needed to be able to be properly manned and do it safely, to get the job done. Then not too far down the road we started to look at what else could the Marines contribute, and that was of course [VMA(AW)]-533, they were the first guys to go over. 533 was the first in Aviano. 533 went in there and then another two whole squadrons -- those were single-seat squadrons. [Robert E.] "Rooster" Schmidle would be a good guy to talk to. He was the CO [commanding officer] of VMFA-251.

ALLISON: I talked to Rooster about his air strike.

NYLAND: Did you ever talk to Marty Post? You haven't?

ALLISON: Not about that, but he had one of the squadrons there.

NYLAND: He had 533 and he was the guy that took them into Aviano, all the set up and everything. Of course, [Monger] was the lieutenant in his squadron and I went over there and flew with those guys. I remember when [Charles E.] "Monger" [Ehlert], his dad [Norman E. Ehlert] came over -- his dad was PP&O [Plans, Policies, Operations] at the time and came over as a three star to be the guest of honor at the birthday ball.

ALLISON: He's kind of a legend. His name keeps coming up a lot.

NYLAND: He was a great American.

ALLISON: He was mentioned in regard to the night systems acquisition that went into the Harriers and the Hornets, with Terry Mattke..

NYLAND: Well, [Skunk] [Norman Ehlert] was in APP [aviation, plans and programs], and actually I worked for him when I was doing the congressional budget and all the procurement stuff. [Jefferson D.] "Beak" Howell was there before Skunk and Beak went down to the Navy through OP-501, 501C, I think, and then Skunk came in and he was there for a while. I

can't remember if he went down there also. Then we had another guy who came in there. His first name was [Denny], but I can't think of his last name now, and he was there for a while.

ALLISON: Wasn't Denny Krupp?

NYLAND: No, no, it was a guy who was older than me. The evolution of how we got there is probably better known by somebody else, but I think the thing that was always good for us was, whenever they said "Go," they were dazzled. Early on in the Deny Flight, when we put airplanes over there, I know they were dazzled when I was CG [commanding general] and we took 533 and [VMFA(AW)-] 332 and put 24 airplanes there. They were on their way and within two days of arriving in Taszar they were doing combat ops.

ALLISON: That's amazing.

NYLAND: Don Davis had a lot to do with that. Well, he was the guy that put that maintenance support package together. That was the first time we'd ever done that, put that together.

ALLISON: Was that specifically for the Taszar thing?

NYLAND: Yes. We knew we were going to be remote from everything and had to have a certain amount of IMA [intermediate level maintenance activity] capability to go over and OMA [operation level maintenance activity] capability and understanding how we would receive parts, where they'd come from, what kind of schedules. Don Davis, just what a magic guy. He did terrific things.

The jets, they were ready to go, and he kept them that way. That was an interesting place where they stayed. It was sort of like the BOQ [bachelors' officer quarters], which was not on the base. It was a barracks, anyway, if not BOQ, for what had been a MiG base. For years, and you remember going to WestPac and going in that one little ready room there in there in Iwakuni where they had the MiG there and they had the F-4 in trail, looking through his gunsight. Well, when we got to Taszar and we went out there and got in this barracks, and they got a MiG-21 with an F-4 in his gunsights. I guess they had the same thoughts we did.

ALLISON: You had mentioned the EA-6s. Do you feel like -- talking about Allied Force, the '99 evolution? They were tasked so heavily, it seemed like.

NYLAND: They were.

ALLISON: Do you feel like the Air Force knew how to use the EA-6s, or were they just willy-nilly going out there and using them.

NYLAND: I think they knew how to use them. I think what helped, but added to that tasking we were also supporting Southern Watch and Northern Watch. So we had all of it, so that kept them on the road. In fact, there was this is something I do know a little bit about, because I took them over there, but when we took the squadron to Northern Watch into Incirlik; basically, they didn't go with all their airplanes. By 60 days after that, the rest of their airplanes went to join them, so I think tasking was correct, but we were trying to husband assets and I've always been a believer, that if your squadron goes, you take all of your stuff. I wanted to see them go. The word I got was, "No, it's only going to be three or it's only going to be four," or whatever it was.

ALLISON: At Incirlik?

NYLAND: At Incirlik. But like I said, within 60 days the rest of them were there, and they were used to good effect, I think. But it was tough with four squadrons, trying to support tasking across the globe with these things, and I think that's probably when we first started gapping Iwakuni and using the Prowlers that were out there to support the [USS] Midway [CV 41], because we were just so heavily committed to doing stuff over there in and out of the European theater. It's a great airplane and a great capability, and then paired with the Hornet it is a really, really significant opportunity to be able to do -- especially against their air defenses. We were ready, and those guys, they never let us down.

ALLISON: You could shoot a HARM [high speed anti-radiation missile] off a Hornet.

NYLAND: Right.

ALLISON: But they had the HARMs on the EA-6s.

NYLAND: Had them on both, so the worked as a package. So if we had the capability and if the ATO [air tasking order] supported it, we'd put them up there together, because then it was doubly effective.

ALLISON: In the sense that you just had more HARM to shoot.

NYLAND: We had more HARM to shoot, but you could also coordinate the information between the two airplanes and you'd really get a better ultimate solution for the HARM. We liked doing that, but they're both capable of doing it. They had good weapons systems.

ALLISON: OK. So no problems, any problems with command and control there at Allied Force?

NYLAND: I think, again, it's kind of like being in Washington. Once you leave the Washington area, where the fight is about resources and you go to war where you've got to get a job done, we always seem to figure out how to integrate into the command and control structure, how to get it done, and I think that was the case there, whether it was one squadron, 533, or whether it was multiple squadrons. We often get caught up in what happens in Washington, as opposed to recognizing just how great the commanders that are out there in the operating forces know how to get the job done. I'm sure that in retrospect, you always remember the good stuff, but there were probably some extra meetings to iron out how I was going to set up on the ATO and what could I do, how best to employ my weapons systems. But, again, I think it comes back to having commanders who know when to go sit down with whoever they're working with or for and explain the capability and tell them what works, how to best use the weapons system, and then they're going to know how to put it all together. I think in every case we made that work. I think that's something that I thought was pretty good.

ALLISON: What about the ATARS [airborne tactical aviation reconnaissance system]? I saw somewhere that was the first use of the ATARS. They pulled it out of research and development and they put it on those jets.

NYLAND: It was. Another guy to talk about that was Duncan Hienz. Duncan was a PM [program manager] for ATARS. I'm trying to remember now whether we had three sets per squadron or four sets per squadron down there. We put those into Taszar. I even flew a couple of hops on it. It was pretty capable, pretty interesting stuff that needed to be updated more and needed to be able to take care of what the APG-73 could do that it was not designed up with, with some of the scan modes and some ways to downloaded also, and down linked. But I think it turned out to be a pretty capable system. It's pretty much a tactical system and while there were places where it got used over there, I think they were probably more concerned with operational and strategic topography as opposed to tactical because, for one thing, we didn't have ground forces of our own committed, where you'd really want to have that, if you had our troop-to-troop contacts. It was still valuable to help identify targets and BMPs and do things like that, but that was the first time that we

deployed it, and it worked pretty darn well. I was impressed with it. I remembered -- I came up in the old RF-4B days, and I remember when ATARS was being developed. I'd actually never flown one until I flew it over there off of Taszar. There was another system, too, they put into the theater, ASPJ, which had been the all source protection jammer or something like that, which we had worked on for years and years and years and had never put on the airplanes. It got put on the shelf, but when it came time to put Hornets in there, that was the best thing that was out there. I think it was primarily for the SA-6, but we got that stuff back.

ALLISON: That would be back probably into the Deny Flight time period.

NYLAND: I think we pulled them out for Deny Flight initially, yes. Then we knew we could get it again when we went to Hungary. That was pretty good stuff.

ALLISON: OK. Did you ever get the impression they wanted the Hornet, the Ds over there, was the TacAir [tactical air controller airborne] capability (inaudible)?

NYLAND: I think absolutely. We could put them on, we could put them in there with the two-crewed airplane and keep refueling them and they could control so much more air than any other capability they had over there. I think without question, once it turned out we started having those two-seat Hornets and having that TAC(A), FAC(A) capability, we started having to worry about service life on those airplanes, actually, before we did the [F/A-18] Cs, because everybody wanted that capability. They wanted that ability to have somebody who could put eyes on the target and control 12, 14, 16 flights before they had to go to the tanker and then do it again. I think it was recognized that in the TAC or FAC role, it can be done to some level in a single-seat airplane. That two-seat airplane is what that's designed for. It's exceptionally capable of doing that, and then the crews were well trained and we trained to that. They were ready for it.

ALLISON: OK, the MWSS that went over there, did they have to do an extraordinary amount of work to get that field ready?

NYLAND: Actually, the field, as I recall, was pretty well ready, because it had been -- for a lot of different units that went into that theater that was where they stopped on their way in.

ALLISON: And they were flying transports in there and so forth.

NYLAND: That's right. Transports were going in and out of there. KBR [Kellogg, Brown and Root] was already there with a mess hall. The biggest things that we had to do were things like fuel, ordnance, ammunition stowing points, combat loading areas, and then

building our own city with our capability, that had communications. So from a standpoint of did we exercise all of our capabilities? We didn't have to, but we exercised the heck out of the ones that we did. Like I said, the mess hall was already there. The field was an active field. Did it need arresting gear? Yes. It had CALA [combat aircraft loading area] areas and all of that. Then we had to work pretty hard to see if we couldn't get -- as I recall, we got refueling trucks out of the caves in Norway, run by train down there. So we had those, and the same with the TAFDS [tactical airfield fuel dispensing system] so we could hot refuel. They were doing great putting up places. That was a big deployment. I was really, really proud of those guys that went over there and they did a really terrific job.

ALLISON: It really was very unusual, too.

NYLAND: It was unusual. I mean, operating out of Hungary and flying into the combat zone. I guess that goes again to the point that they wanted that capability and so they looked to get them down in Aviano, get them down in Hungary.

ALLISON: Was it too full at Aviano?

NYLAND: I think it was too full, and they didn't have the ramp space and everything, and they had the legs and the tankers were available, so this turned out to be a pretty good fit.

ALLISON: That's so close to Belgrade. This would be about -- I had looked at it geographically. I know it's closer than Aviano.

NYLAND: Oh, yes.

ALLISON: That would be the closest place, but flights would be coming in from the north and everybody else was coming in from the west.

NYLAND: Changed directions and no, it was pretty close. I remember flying out of Aviano and it seemed like lots of times we'd take off. The first stop we made was south and to the tanker and then in. We didn't have to do that coming out of Taszar. That turned out to be a pretty good little location.

ALLISON: What about force protection? Did MWSS have to do their own force protection?

NYLAND: Yes. We still at that point had our own MP capability and were able to provide in our area and particularly I think ASPs [ammunition supply point], those things that weren't necessarily going to be there unless we were there. I think that's part of them building up the infrastructure, building up the support, if you will, the Marine city or the carrier ashore kind

of concept. Obviously, it's the MWSS that builds the city and then it's our C2 [command and control] guys that plug us into the network above the ground.

ALLISON: You have your own Control Group 28 [Marine Wing Control Group 28]?

NYLAND: Yep, so it was good. I'll tell you another guy who you may want to talk to is [Mant] "Gator" Hawkins. Do you know Gator?

ALLISON: Yes.

NYLAND: He's down in Texas now. He was the OpsO [operations officer] for one of those squadrons, and then he went up and I think he acted as XO for the overarching group piece that we put over there. He'd have a bunch of insight as well.

ALLISON: I did talk to him a long time about that. He sent me some good stuff on it.

NYLAND: Now, I know he had some interesting little sitdowns with how do we get used and how do we fit into the ATO and some of those. Again, he knew the weapons system, he knew our capabilities, and they ended up figuring out how to do it.

ALLISON: He was pretty critical about something about the Air Force, the way they were being used, something like that. I can't remember what it was, but I remember he had some pretty strong criticism about the missions.

NYLAND: I'm sure that -- like I said, I'm sure there were some rough areas. I don't remember. I'm certain if they were, Mant would be a good guy to get to know them, and the other guy would be [James E.] "Hoss" Cartwright, who was the CO at the time.

ALLISON: Benes.

NYLAND: Oh, [Thomas Benes] "Beans" was, that's right.

ALLISON: Beans Benes. I can't remember who the MAG-31 Forward was.

NYLAND: I can't either. I know Gator was his XO and I'm trying to remember who we sent. [William G.] "Sluggo" Butler had 533 and [Russell] Jones had 332. Like I said, there are always going to be rough spots, but it's a matter of sitting down and figuring out how you get across. There were probably – particularly Mant Hawkins, he was a born operator, and if they didn't want to use them the way that he wanted to use them, I'm sure there were.

ALLISON: He was also famous for the Libyan operations aboard the [USS] Coral Sea doing the HARM shooting and developing the tactics for that.

NYLAND: He's a very talented guy and a hell of an airplane driver, too.

ALLISON: I've done a couple of interviews with him. They were getting shot at some, too. A lot of SAMs [surface to air missiles] coming up.

NYLAND: A couple of those night flights, they really got lit up. One of the guys that was over there just right now is taking over [VMFA-] 232 in a couple of weeks. That was Dan "Knuckles" Shipley.

ALLISON: He was in your squadron. No, no, he was up here.

NYLAND: He was [General James F.] "Tamer's" [Amos'] aide at MCCDC [Marine Corps Combat Development Center].

ALLISON: That's where I met him.

NYLAND: He was a young guy in the squadron.

ALLISON: And he's going to be taking over ….

NYLAND: 232, out on the west coast.

ALLISON: Red Devils.

NYLAND: My old outfit, yes. It's neat to see it all cycle around. Good stuff.

ALLISON: All right, anything else on Allied Force?

NYLAND: I don't think so on Allied Force, specifically. I remember, I'll never forget standing down there at Beaufort, watching those 24 jets roll out of there, the guys just standing there with their jaws on the ground that we could do that. We did it, and three days later they're in Hungary and they're doing combat ops.

ALLISON: And how much notification had you had?

NYLAND: We had a couple of weeks. We were pretty sure it was coming, but we didn't know exactly personnel. We had already started building the racks and everything because we knew about what it was going to be like. It was still pretty impressive to watch 24 jets roll down the runway one morning.

ALLISON: Everything they had. No backups.

NYLAND: No, that's it.

ALLISON: And they were brand new at that time, too.

NYLAND: That's when they went to Taszar, Hungary. They had gotten them when I was AWC [assistant wing commander], so we got the first ones in probably '93, '94 timeframe, I guess. Then that was '99 I think when we rolled them to Hungary, because I was there from '98 to 2000 after I came up from the MEF [Marine expeditionary force].

ALLISON: I remember they had a little trouble getting a D squadron to get into Aviano. That was probably [Rooster's] squadron, a single-seat squadron. The D squadron, they had just gotten their airplanes. They weren't ready to go or something.

NYLAND: That could be. I suspect that the ones that we had, 533 had already been, and we might have been in at that point. That was when I was AWC. At that point, then we were still standing them up and 533 was first, and then 332 and [VMFA(AW)-] 224. It may have been that they wanted the capability, we didn't have the two-seaters.

ALLISON: Well, I'd like to ask you some of these earlier questions to sort of back up. We're out of order here. This is the early days of HARM.

NYLAND: Actually, we'd had HARM since Vietnam, but we hadn't had much occasion to use them. The Wild Weasels used to shoot HARMs and Marine and Navy airplanes could shoot them.

ALLISON: Even in Vietnam?

NYLAND: In Vietnam.

ALLISON: I thought they were...

NYLAND: They were the predecessor. I forget what we called them.

ALLISON: Shrike?

NYLAND: Shrike is one of them.

ALLISON: Bullpup was one of them.

NYLAND: But they were all predecessors of HARM, anti-air control radars and missiles.

ALLISON: They were shot in Libya, so they'd been around a while.

NYLAND: Iif you look at Vietnam, the only guys that carried those were the guys that went up north, because nobody doing close air support inside the southern part of the country -- it was pretty benign other than guns and AAA [anti-aircraft artillery]. There wasn't much very often that you saw from a missile kind of a threat.

ALLISON: Scott O'Grady.

NYLAND: I remember that.

ALLISON: Do you remember Monger being involved in it?

NYLAND: I don't, but that doesn't mean he wasn't.

ALLISON: [Will Thomas]?

NYLAND: He ended up going down there. He's back up here. He's working in the J-8, so there's another source of information.

ALLISON: He's still on active duty.

NYLAND: Yes, he's a colonel and he's in the J-8. I remember the Scott O'Grady thing, because Marty Berndt was the MEU [Marine expeditionary force] commander and he went in in the [CH-] 53 that pulled him out. I remember that part really vividly, and I was trying to remember exactly what year it was. I think I was at the MEF when that happened. No, I left the wing in November of '95, came up to the J-8, so I must have been at the [2d Marine Aircraft] Wing when it happened. That's the part that I remember the best.

I know that 533 had a role, but I don't remember exactly what Monger said. Do you know how to get a hold of Monger?

ALLISON: He's still on active duty, too?

NYLAND: No, he retired. He's living out in Washington State. If you need to get a hold of him, I can hook you up.

ALLISON: I did talk to him about it a long time ago when he was still on active duty, in Guam. He wrote it all up and sent me an e-mail. They had a pretty...

NYLAND: They had a significant role.

ALLISON: Locating O'Grady by flying him and Thomas over the position they thought where he was, and then they were able to pinpoint it because they do this triangulation thing. They flew north and south over it and then they went east and west. They were able to put an X over where he was, and then they passed that information to the AWACS [airborne warning and control system].

NYLAND: That makes sense to me now. I'd forgotten what it was.

ALLISON: They never mention it anymore, and that seems like that's kind of important, an important part of it. They had developed a plan, written a plan up. They had given it to CFACC [coalition forces air component commander] and CFACC says that sounds good. When they got the radio transmission, CFACC said, "OK, go do it," so that's what they did.

NYLAND: Monger, what a great American. He gave up command and retired and moved back out to Washington State and works for [Boeing] Institute, the guys that make the ScanEagle.

ALLISON: Oh, really? OK. Do you have any comments on the Harrier's participation?

NYLAND: I guess I want to say that they did well. I think people were pleased. They were operating off of the MEU and up and inside the boot there and I don't remember anything that stood out one way or the other, other than that they got the mission done.

ALLISON: I just heard that there had been some pushback on their use by the Air Force command and control.

NYLAND: Well, I'm sure because they came from the water that they had to change some kind of procedures and whatever to accommodate them. The command and control procedures were pretty darn complicated in Deny Flight, as I recall, how many people you had to go through to get to where you were finally doing your work and then all kinds of restrictions on altitude, about what altitude band you could be in and not be able to break 5,000 feet or 10,000 feet. It was not simple, and there was a lot of procedural stuff, which I think is probably because with a coalition, how else are you going to do it when all the airplanes don't have the same capabilities? There's always that same little bit of animosity about bringing something different to the fight, but if you have a capability and you can use it.

ALLISON: Do you remember anything about the ROE, what the ROE was?

NYLAND: Yes, I was talking about the procedural ROE. Every day you went out there it was different, what altitude you could go below and what you had to have in sight to go below and to get the clearance from the AWACS guys, whether it was the NATO AWACS or our AWACS. It was very, very procedurally oriented. It was not left to the exclusive domain of the flight leader and mission commander. Then, I think certainly for some of the coalition partners, depending on what they saw or tried to do, they had to include another loop probably back to their government to see if it fit within the caveat under which they were authorized to come participate. I recall it being very procedural and an awful lot of people to talk to before you got where you were going.

ALLISON: And then we had the Deliberate Force, the big bombing campaign there in '95. Then you pick up the J-8 job. Anything special about that, sir?

NYLAND: Well, it turned out to be pretty interesting. I'm sitting there sort of fat, dumb and happy at 2nd MAW [Marine Aircraft Wing] enjoying life as an AWC, and I get this call that says, "We want you to come up and interview for this job in the J-8, but don't worry about it because they really already like the Air Force guy, but all the services have to nominate." I

said OK, so I rent a car and I drive up here and I go to see Pete Osman, who is in Manpower at the time, and he gives me all the stuff. So I go down there and they schedule a round of interviews. I have to be interviewed by the J-8, then the director of the Joint Staff. Then I actually got interviewed by the vice chairman, who was [Admiral William A.] "Bill" Owens at the time, at 5:30 in the morning. I saw the J-8 and I saw [General Walter] "Walt" Kross, who was the director of the staff one day, and then the next morning early came in and interviewed with Admiral Owens. When that was done, then I checked out with Manpower and drove back down. As I recall, that ended up on a Friday that I talked to them. I came into work I think on Monday morning and I've got an e-mail that's like 3:40 a.m. Sunday from General [Charles C.] Krulak saying, "Congratulations. You got the job and they want you yesterday." I'm going, "Whoa, whoa, how can this be?" I called up there and I said, "What's going on?" They said, "We interviewed and they really liked you and you got the job and they want you." I said, "Man." This is right before Thanksgiving. I organized the move and everything and I had to put Brenda and Brandy in the guesthouse at Cherry Point. I went up there, found a place to live and started to work. Then at Christmastime I got four or five days off so I went back down and picked them up and dropped them off and they got to see the house and all the junk. It was a great job. I got exposed to so many things, which it turns out every time I went to Washington, I never went as a volunteer, but every time I went up there I learned more and I was better suited to do whatever I did next. This turned out to be in that very same vein. But I had the money guys' work for me. I had the acquisition guys work for me and I had the intel guys that worked for me and I had the Manpower guys that worked for me all inside the J-8. It was fascinating. I learned an awful lot, got exposed to an awful lot of great people and worked with the JROC [Joint Requirements Oversight Commission] when Admiral Owens was the vice chairman. Turned out to be I was there I think 17, 18 months and really a phenomenal opportunity and a phenomenal education, and it all was useful when I came back, first as the deputy at II MEF and then as the Wing CG, and then obviously all of it came back to play after that when I came back to the building. Yes, it was an incredible time.

ALLISON: I'm trying to think back on your career. Was that your first introduction into that world of acquisitions, procurements?

NYLAND: The acquisition piece was sort of new to me. I'd already done the budgeting thing, because I'd done that for the Marine Corps, and understood the budget and the Hill and the legislative process and all of that. I didn't know that much about the acquisition process other than a few things, and I had to get a lot more knowledge there. In fact, we used to sit on a lot of the DABs, the defense acquisition boards, because if the vice chairman couldn't go, General [Joseph W.] Ralston, then he'd send it down to the J-8, and if the J-8 couldn't go, then I would. I learned a lot about the acquisition piece. The Manpower piece was pretty straightforward. The money piece I knew. The other area that I got to do an awful lot was in the intel world, which I'd not ever spent much time in, which was really fascinating, doing things out at NRO [National Reconnaissance Office] and looking at future architectures, what kinds and types of satellites and capabilities. It turned out to be -- I worked my fanny off. When I left, I didn't realize how tired I was, but it was quite an 18 months and certainly really helped me do the next two jobs, but even more so I think it helped me an awful lot when I came back to DC as a three star.

It was a great opportunity and I learned an awful lot. I worked with some wonderful people, Dave McCloud, who unfortunately was killed. He owned his own YAK [Yakovlev] and was killed in it out in Alaska. Little Soviet trainer. In fact, I flew one about two years ago, great little plane. Another buddy of mine owns one, a YAK-56.

ALLISON: Where do you get them? Soviet surplus?

NYLAND: Through the Czechs or other people and they show up on the international market, I guess, some of them maybe from South America. I don't know where he got his from. A nice little prop airplane, but man, you can pull eight, nine Gs in the thing, and it's a great little machine.

ALLISON: Do you do any flying now?

NYLAND: One of the boards I was on, the CEO [chief executive officer] had a helicopter and I used to fly that with him, but then they got bought by a bigger company and I don't go there anymore.

ALLISON: Did you learn to fly the helicopters when you were in the wing?

NYLAND: I learned when I was at MATSG. I went up to Whiting and the guys up there that ran the instructors' school -- in fact, one of them just retired not too long ago, Jeff Tomczak. You may have known Jeff. He was down there at the Warfighting Lab. He

taught me how to fly the Bell Jet Ranger helo. One of my philosophies when I went down to Pensacola was I wasn't going to specialize in one thing and then thereby limit who I could see. So what I did is I got checked out in everything, and then I'd go and I'd fly a T-34 one day. I'd fly a helicopter another day. Then I'd go down to mainside, Pensacola, and I'd fly in an A-4 or a T-39. Then I'd go up to Meridian and fly in the T-2 and the A-4. That way I got around to see all of the Marines and made sure they knew that there was somebody looking out for them and, plus, get to know the commanders. It was great. Then when I got to 2d MAW, it was wonderful. I started flying all the helicopters, too, because for the same reason, you get to go down to the maintenance bases, talk to the Marines, how they like their squadron, how are things going? How are your parts, how's your readiness? Plus, then go up in the ready room and meet all the young officers and see what's going on, check out the atmosphere. You know yourself you walk in a squadron in the middle of the afternoon, you get a pretty good feel for how things are both on the garage floor and up in the ready room. For me, it turned out to be absolutely wonderful. In fact, the hardest thing I ever did in my life was trying to air refuel a CH-53, and think I chased that tanker for about an hour and a half and got plugged in three times. I came out of there, I thought I'd flown back-to-back ACM [air combat maneuvering] hops. My flight suit was soaked.

ALLISON: Dang hard thing to do.

NYLAND: Very hard. You think about doing that at night when you have to, and I'd be going, "Whoa."

ALLISON: When you've got a cargo full of refugees out of Somalia, like those guys did. That was pretty awesome.

NYLAND: It was great. I flew them when I was AWC and flew them when I was CG.

ALLISON: Were you able to log first pilot time?

NYLAND: No. I logged copilot time, but no first pilot. They always had [makeups] by there. But even when I was DCS Air, or deputy commandant for aviation, I was current in the Hornet, the 46 and the C-12.

ALLISON: Down hops?

NYLAND: Down hops.

ALLISON: OK, then you were promoted to major general.

NYLAND: I get promoted to major general. General [Charles C.] Krulak promoted me in the theater in Henderson Hall, and then I went down to be deputy of II MEF, initially for General [Charles E.] Wilhelm. But within two months, he was nominated and went down to become SouthCom and Wayne Rollings came in, so I spent most of my time with Wayne Rollings.

That turned out to be another wonderful tour for me, because it turns out the deputy was sort of the big daddy for the MEUs, and so I spent the bulk of my time working on the MEUs and their training and their workup, SOTG [Special Operations Training Group] guys, Colonel Mike Williams and all of these guys, and then the evaluations and certifications of the MEUs before we went them out.

ALLISON: SOC [special operations capable] certification, right?

NYLAND: SOC cert, and then I'd go out and visit them around the world, visiting them, mixing with [Richard F.] Rich Natonski's MEU in Israel and Sam Helland's in Spain. It was a wonderful job and it certainly helped make me much more of a MAGTF officer, I think. It was a whole lot more in-depth understanding of everything that went into the MEU out of that. I was that for 11 months, and it was pretty great.

ALLISON: The whole special operations thing at Quantico was impressive, in a way. They developed the special operations step right at the end of the '80s.

NYLAND: Al [Alfred M.] Gray. [Jr]

ALLISON: Al Gray, and then they roll into the '90s, and that's what everybody wants, because of all the humanitarian operations and the NEOs [non-combatant evacuation operations] and stuff.

NYLAND: That was very prescient on the Marine Corps' part to do that. Now, there was some indication that there was a lot of that coming, because we'd been asked to be part of and contribute to the Special Ops Command here and elected not to.

ALLISON: Was that during Gray's commandancy?

NYLAND: Right. But the development of those kinds of capabilities and putting them on the MEU, which was forward deployed, you'd be hard pressed to find very many NEOs that were effective that didn't involve one of the Marine Corps MEUs. They're forward deployed, they're out there, they're paid for, they're ready to go and they're trained to do it.

ALLISON: I can't think of one that the Army did.

NYLAND: I'm sure that there were one or two that were able to be done with fly-ins from transports and taking people out without having to put people on the shore, but I think all your significant -- and the one in Albania, which [Emerson] Gardner did when he had the MEU. Sam Helland did a couple.

ALLISON: Sam Helland…I can't remember which ones he did, but I went through all that. It was one after another, and sometimes two or three at one time.

NYLAND: He was really, really busy. [Emerson] "Emo" [Gardner] did a couple. Emo did one out of Albania and I think was poised to do one out of Liberia.

ALLISON: Down in the Congo.

NYLAND: Yes, but that was a great job. Wayne Rollings was terrific to work with.

ALLISON: That's when they were doing Liberia and the other place, Central African Republic.

NYLAND: They had so many of them.

ALLISON: All at the same time.

NYLAND: We were still doing the big exercises in Norway, too. Bold Guard and Northern Wedding. It was a very interesting and exciting 11 months down there at the MEF, and then I moved up to the Wing. That was magnificent.

ALLISON: I was just wondering if the MEUs were used in their role so much because they had that capability. In other words, they're there, so use them. We had these problems there in the world. I wonder if we would have been inactive if the MEUs had not been there. Do you know what I'm saying?

NYLAND: Well, I think when those kind of things start to erupt and they show up in the National Military Command Center, usually the first question is, where are the MEUs and where are the carriers? I think for us to have foreseen the ability to be able to do that from the seas and then train for the people to do it, it was a benefit to the nation. Now, those are the first two questions you get, where are the MEUs and where are the carriers? That's America's forward deployed. That's our first show of force. That's, "Hey, we're here and we can hand out food or we can kick your ass. You take your pick." And we're self-sustainable. For us to get into that humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, NEO kind of thing with those forward-deployed forces made huge sense and has paid huge dividends for the nation.

ALLISON: Plus the Marine Corps.

NYLAND: The Marines have done that for the nation, and I think that's pretty special.

ALLISON: And there were so many hurricanes and volcanoes going off at that time.

NYLAND: Yes, they had some bad hurricanes hit Florida in those days, and of course that was yet again -- and South America. I remember sending a lot of-- particularly our MWSS [Marine wing support squadrons] guys, a lot of heavy-lift helicopters down there, plus augmenting them with our [KC-] 130s. It was busy all the time and providing great Marine colonels and lieutenant colonels to lead these efforts and to go down there. I mean, you've got all these other things going on and then you've got the natural disasters, and we're right there working on those things, too. The [CH-] 53s, the 130s and the MWSSs; a busy bunch of guys.

ALLISON: Valuable, the 53s, as well.

NYLAND: It's a great machine.

ALLISON: They're not easy to [aerial] refuel.

NYLAND: Not easy to refuel.

ALLISON: I've heard also the C-130 guys say that when you're refueling a 53, they get all sorts of weird turbulence and stuff and a lot of weird noise and stuff that if you hadn't done it before, it's kind of spooky.

NYLAND: I hadn't been in the back end of a 130 when the 53s were there, but it's got to look different to the observer, and it's got to get his attention when he looks out there and sees how that blade moves up and down. You go, hmm. You've got to be thinking about that and you've got to be watching that hose. That is pretty colorful.

ALLISON: OK. Was there a feeling, a sense, or was there in actuality a sense that the wing or the Marine Corps was being overused, that it was wearing down our resources and were not being replaced, that kind of a thing?

NYLAND: I don't think so. We knew we were using the airplanes, obviously, just like we had to do in Iraq and Afghanistan, at a rate that exceeds what was planned for them. Again, I think it was a matter of the National Command Authority had a need, we had a capability and we go in. That's what we train for, that's what we get paid to be ready to do and be able to do, and so we would always look at that, "Yeah, what's the utilization? Should we move some jets around? Are those the right ones to send?" We had them going into SLDM [standard level depot maintenance] and there are other factors that we should consider. But I

think in the end of there was a need for a capability and we could deliver it, we delivered it. I'm a firm believer that that's what they have us for, and that's what we train to. We've used up a lot of our equipment. I think these last six years have really taken a toll. I think before I retired we used to look at, for instance, ground equipment and say one year on the ground over there was like seven of the normal use.

ALLISON: In Iraq?

NYLAND: In Iraq. I think we probably still don't know 100 percent the long-term effect on airplanes. That fine dust, what is it doing back in the 17th stage of those turbines, unless we have to pull a motor off and look at it. Again, if you've got them and you don't use them, then why have em?

ALLISON: OK, any issues with safety as we're moving to your time as CG of 2nd MAW?

NYLAND: We were very blessed. I think we had one, maybe two, mishaps while I was there and both were material failures. One was a [AH-1] Cobra where the rocket came off incorrectly and they went down right there in Bogue Sound. I think we had one other. You could find this out for sure because I can't remember anymore, but I know I walked away thinking that we'd done pretty darn well from an operational standpoint, and the safety record stayed pretty darn good.

ALLISON: Even the [AV-8B] Harrier.

NYLAND: Yes, everybody. It was good.

ALLISON: You lost that one Harrier off the [USS] Kearsarge, during that landing. The 26th MEU.

NYLAND: What year was that?

ALLISON: That would be '99. Just a carrier landing during the Kosovo operations.

NYLAND: I don't remember. But I know that -- I'm pretty confident that there were less than five mishaps over two years, I think. The guys, great leaders, they did great work.

ALLISON: You had the EA-6B gondola car thing.

NYLAND: That actually had happened while I was at II MEF.

ALLISON: You weren't there when that occurred. Was that a hot potato for you?

NYLAND: I'll tell you, the guy who did an awful lot of work with that, first off, was [Michael P.] “Mike” Ryan, who had the Wing at the time. Then I think it was ultimately adjudicated by Lant when I was at the Wing. That was a very, very emotional and

emotionally charged event. I remember the trials. They had the trials, the hearings, whatever they were, at Camp Lejeune. That was a really tough one. I don't know about that one. It didn't look good, it didn't make sense.

ALLISON: I was sort of amazed that he got off, actually, on that deal. I guess there were good reasons.

NYLAND: I guess they -- they brought in all these experts that did stuff with speed and altitude and everything. I guess I was always concerned that they'd just been down there trying to fly a low level and didn't know where they were. It's just not worth trying to second guess. They went through a very lengthy process and the end is the end, but that was an ugly time. It was very, very hard on the squadron, and certainly hard on the folks in Italy and the relationships at a certainly far higher level than I ever participated in, which is often the case. That was one that we surely wish never had happened.

ALLISON: It was sort of the flipside of the [Scott] O'Grady rescue, when the Marine Corps looked so good, and then that happened.

NYLAND: That's right. We wasted an awful lot of goodwill.

ALLISON: Any fallout on the HAWK program going away about this time? I'm not sure exactly when that was. It might have been before you took over the Wing.

NYLAND: I just remember the HAWKs going because at that point we weren't growing the Marine Corps. In fact, there were discussions of us becoming smaller and everybody was looking for efficiencies. We had started with an agreement that the Army would support us if we needed to have that kind of capability, but the historical threat showed that we hadn't needed them in an awful long time and it was a lot of people, manpower intensive, a lot of rolling stock. I think the decision, it was a Headquarters Marine Corps decision, that we could get out of that business if the Army was going to provide this capability for us should we need it, and so we divested ourselves of the HAWK and kept just the Stinger and the in-close medium-altitude stuff. It was one of those that was another part of the time when money was scarce and people were talking about the Marine Corps potentially getting smaller. This is about the time I think of one of the first what they used to call the BUR, the bottom-up review, and there were rumors that the Marine Corps was going to be told to go to 159[000], which was public for a long time. It was looked at as a capability that we could

get from someone else and therefore we could afford not to have it and apply those savings somewhere else in the Marine Corps.

ALLISON: This was when Krulak was the Commandant. I guess he was having to fight that battle.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: And about this time the MV-22.

NYLAND: Yes, it was standing up and we had a couple of airplanes go down there, and then we had the tragedy at Marana [Arizona], which while I was there that just put everything onto hold.

ALLISON: That was right before you left, wasn't it?

NYLAND: I think we were within a month of having some airplanes show up and that all just went right to a screeching halt after that tragedy. That's a tough one.

ALLISON: That was April, I believe.

NYLAND: I'd say it was April or May, because it was right before I rolled out of there. I remember going down there and having been down at the squadron flying the simulator and we were within weeks of having a couple airplanes come in to New River.

ALLISON: They were out at Yuma. I guess you were still in operational testing and stuff.

NYLAND: It was OT [operational testing]. We didn't even own the airplanes, I don't think. I think they were still owned by the [factory].

ALLISON: So they really weren't 2nd Wing accountable at that time? That's a story in itself, the V-22, getting that through the door.

NYLAND: Well, I'll tell you, it's sure doing great work now.

ALLISON: Is it?

NYLAND: Yes. It did great work in Iraq, and I was talking to a couple guys last night and they are huge over there in Afghanistan, with the ability to get around that battlefield, plus operate at high altitudes.

ALLISON: What are they doing about the oxygen? There was the thing about you can't fly above 10,000 if you've got people in the back because it's not a pressurized cabin and that kind of thing. What are they doing about that?

NYLAND: I think they're just staying below 10,000 feet. You can put the crew on oxygen without any difficulty. Supplemental oxygen for Marines in the back would be another

matter. My guess is, maybe they get above 10 doing resupplies and stuff like that. They probably know when to put the crew on oxygen. I don't know. It's a good question, since there are some pretty high areas over there.

ALLISON: Up there in the mountains and all. That's good to hear, that they're doing really well.

NYLAND: They're doing terrific.

ALLISON: If it really is what they say, it's going to be a real transformation. It seems to fit with what the Marines are doing there during their operations.

NYLAND: They're doing great. Between them and the 53s, they're making a huge difference.

ALLISON: Are there any plans to accelerate the procurement and operational fielding of the K, CH-53K? It seems like that would be...

NYLAND: I think that's being pushed as hard as it can. The shortcoming, the short pole, in the 53E is the tail fold and that's good for, as I recall, 6,600 or 7,000 hours. That's the area that's caused us to start to retire some of those Es or have them reworked so that we can keep them in the fleet.

ALLISON: And you folded the blades to put them on the ship.

NYLAND: No, the back of the helicopter. At that bulkhead wall.

ALLISON: It's just being overstressed?

NYLAND: It's just got too many hours on them. They've been using them hard. I think they used it harder than they ever thought we would. Everybody always worries about the life and carrier suitability on the Hornets. We're using the heck out of those 53Es too, and so the K, we could use today. I don't know how much more they can accelerate it, though, because of some of the new technologies they're trying to put in it. But from what I understand, it's on track and moving. But we could have used it to deliver in 2011 instead of 2016 or 2017, or whatever I think it is now.

ALLISON: It looks like we're going to be in Afghanistan a while, too. Well, you've come up from a young officer flying in Vietnam to now, the 2nd Wing commander. How's Marine aviation changing over that time period?

NYLAND: Well I would say if I had to put it in the simplest observation, it's become an awful lot more professional. I remember as a young guy, what we had for ground school and

getting ready to get into the airplanes, they were nothing compared to what we do for people today, and people today are tasked and they know their systems and they are ready to get in those airplanes. I look back and I go, you know I was pretty lucky, as sort of a doofus 1st lieutenant. I've got 95 hours in the airplane and I'm stepping on the beach in Chu Lai. I'd never even seen a single piece of RWR [radar warning receiving] gear in any class or anything else, and now they've got it in the airplane there and I have to go learn how to use that before I fly my first mission. We have come so far in our professionalism, particularly I think bolstered by what we do in training.

ALLISON: Stuff like that would be important for MAWTS [Marine Aviation Weapons Training Squadron 1].

NYLAND: I think they've been huge.

ALLISON: Is that the big factor there?

NYLAND: I think they were a huge factor. I think we matured ourselves along the way regardless, but I think they were absolutely a huge role in the professionalism, both on the training and on the operational standpoint from what they do. It's certifications, it's not just this squadron or this air group on this coast that does it that way, to, "Hey, if you are going to be certified a night systems instructor and MAWTS does it, it's going to be the same no matter where you fly Marine airplanes." The education that you get to lead to that point and the education that you get to lead to that point, they're huge, and I think it's huge. I think command screening has helped us, but I think in a word, I think the professionalism is huge. These great young folks are absolutely pros.

I talk to the young ones in Pensacola and I tell them, "I'm glad I came around when I did, because if I was competing with you, I'm pretty sure I know who'd go home."

ALLISON: It's come a long way.

NYLAND: It was great. Getting to that Wing was an incredible time. We were one of the few outfits, too, that built our own JFACC [joint forces air component commander] capability, which I was really proud of when we were down there. I was the JFACC four different times, and on the final exercise we had the Wing split deploy and I had my command group supporting JTFEX [joint task force exercise] out of Bogue Field, where it snowed, of all things, and I had another group in Norway doing ops over there, the exercise. We actually transitioned the JFACC from afloat, from a carrier, to ashore, and then ran the

air off the shore base. That was a capability we worked on from the day I got there and that was part of our graduation exercise. It was terrific.

ALLISON: That's the 2nd Wing command?

NYLAND: 2nd Wing. We took the Wing to the field at least once every year. We exercised it and we had a battle roster that allowed us to reach into all the other services that had done it with us. That was one of the things that was really exciting, one of the things that I was most proud of that we accomplished.

ALLISON: Is that something that you had initiated as Wing commander?

NYLAND: Yes. I had been JFACC twice when I was AWC [assistant wing commander], and then I came back up there and I knew this was a capability. One of the guys who was instrumental in it with me was Larry Groves, and he and I, and we had two great guys, Mark Cyr, command and control guy, and Steve Busby, who's up here now, who were in the J-7. They just set out to make it a reality and we started small and we built ourselves a small deployable capability and we built the capability, if augmented by others, to do even more, to a certain level. We wanted to have a capability that could go in the door first, set up the airspace control measures, ATO etc, and get things operating. Not that we wanted to do it for a big operation or stay there forever, but if at least we needed to, we could do it with our 130s.

ALLISON: Was it ever done for real, real-time operation?

NYLAND: All exercises.

ALLISON: I know that General Harold W. Blot was a temporary JFACC in Somalia, but it was not new then.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: It wasn't that kind of environment, so they stood it down after a short time.

NYLAND: That was one of the more fun things we did. Taking the Wing to the field was always good.

ALLISON: Are you talking about the Carolina maneuvers? Is that what it was?

NYLAND: We'd take them to Bogue and we'd operate when the MEF was in the field down at Lejeune. We were in the field running still as the senior headquarters for the exercise being done in Norway. It was good stuff.

ALLISON: And that's where you'd have the JFACC there, set up for that?

NYLAND: Well, they had their own piece for that, but the JFACC that we did, the big one was done for the JTFX, the big exercise that's done on the east coast, usually tied to carrier certification, before they cruise. It was good times. It went by like the blink of an eye.

ALLISON: I bet your whole career did, in a way.

NYLAND: In a way it did. You look back now and I still remember having to slam that little silver dome in my hand at OCS because we didn't sit down fast enough.

ALLISON: Anything else, sir, as 2nd Wing commander that we haven't talked about? I guess the Key Wives started...

NYLAND: We did an awful lot of work. Brenda and others did an awful lot of work for the Key volunteer and the startup of LINKS [lifestyle, insights, networking, knowledge, skills]. I felt like that was a hugely important program and we really got after the readiness officer piece and making sure that the squadrons had what they needed to take care of the Marines and their families and the same thing, working closely with Camp Lejeune and New River to make sure we had facilities there. We got the video cameras and stuff so that the deployed could have contact with their families. That was a busy time for that program. In fact, Brenda continued to work that when we came up to DC. We made an awful lot of progress in that program. The guy who was really instrumental in that to me was [Colonel David] "Dave" Mollahan, "Irish" Mollahan. He was my G-1 at the time. Because of my emphasis on it, he basically become the wing FRO [Family Readiness Officer], but it was some really, really good things I think that we did that made a difference in the families, which we've always not been as fast to their needs as we might have been.

ALLISON: I guess that was all started by [Lieutenant General Keith] Smith, wasn't it?

NYLAND: Keith Smith was the first to put that together there at 2nd MAW when he had it. Then it continued to get momentum and Janel Howell and [Jefferson D.] "Beak" Howell were very instrumental in moving that along, and of course I was there as AWC and Brenda was there. We saw that and saw the value of it, and then when we came back, we kind of kept it coming along and then it's been maturing in the process. We made a lot of leaps, I would say, from about '99. Certainly while I was down there and then when I was back up here in Washington that the program started to catch on to all Marines, not just on the aviation side.

ALLISON: Through General Krulak. He picked it up.

NYLAND: Right. Zandi [Krulak].

ALLISON: Kind of made it Marine Corps wide.

NYLAND: It was a wonderful privilege and a wonderful opportunity.

ALLISON: Who would have known, though, you leave there in 2000 and the next year the whole world changes? 2001, 9/11.

NYLAND: I know it. I'll never forget that. I'll never forget that one.

ALLISON: You were up here.

NYLAND: My office was 100 feet away from where it hit.

ALLISON: Let's talk about that next time.

NYLAND: We can do that.

ALLISON: Anything else on the 2nd Wing, sir?

NYLAND: I don't think so. I think I've got everything.

ALLISON: One thing, General Rollings, what was his focus?

NYLAND: He's a great warfighter.

ALLISON: Any issues in regard to using aviation?

NYLAND: No, I'll tell you what, working for him first as his deputy and then as his ACE [aviation combat element] for the MEF was terrific. If it had to do with aviation, I got the first call. "Is this is good for us, good for the Marine Corps, does it make sense?" He was terrific. He used and listened to his subordinate commanders, and it was great. He was the CG for a year, I guess, while I was at 2nd MAW, and then [Lieutenant General Emil R.] "Buck" Bedard came up out of the division for the second year I was CG, 2d MAW. Wayne Rollings, what a great warfighter.

ALLISON: I don't hear much about him.

NYLAND: He's retired now. He retired and he ran the Marine Military Academy at Harlingen [Texas] for about seven years, cleaned up all the issues that they had and some pending lawsuits and stuff and is retired now and lives in Ocala, Florida. In fact, I just got an e-mail from his wife, because he doesn't do e-mail still. I sent him an e-mail and I got a note back from [Gwen] that said, "You know better than to send that to Wayne." But he's doing good. He's another one I went to Basic School with.

ALLISON: Really. You were with him in Basic School and--?

NYLAND: [Charles] “Charlie” Bolden, [Wallace] “Chip” Gregson, Jack Klimp, Wayne Rollings. We had five of us that made flag out of that class.

ALLISON: That was the class of '64?

NYLAND: No, we were TBS 1-69. We started on 6 July 1968. That's when the fiscal year used to begin, on 1 July.

ALLISON: Oh, I got a calendar the other day, one of those desk calendars, and the year went from June to July. It must have been based on an old fiscal year.

NYLAND: That's the way it was. It was in the early '70s when we came to the fiscal year of 30 September, 1 October. But when I came to Basic School, I was Alpha Company 1-69, because the fiscal year started 1 July, '68 became fiscal year '69. It seems like yesterday in many ways.

ALLISON: I know. All right, sir.

END SESSION VI

PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee:	General William L. "Spider" Nyland, USMC
Date:	18 June 2013
Location:	Naval Aviation Museum, Pensacola, FL
Interviewer:	Dr. Fred Allison (Historian, USMC History Division) and Steve Heffernan (Oral Historian- Naval Aviation Museum)

SESSION VII

ALLISON: This is the seventh session of the interview with General William "Spider" **NYLAND**, and today is the 18th of June 2013. We're at the Naval Aviation Museum with Steve Heffernan, the oral historian of the Naval Aviation Museum, and I'm Dr. Fred **ALLISON**. We're going to be continuing this interview with Spider and we're talking today about his tours at Headquarters Marine Corps. To begin, thank you for coming in, Spider; really appreciate your support of Marine Corps history and donating your time and your memory to our oral history program.

NYLAND: What's left of it, huh? It's good to be here, Mule.

ALLISON: In the last interview we had finished talking about the 2d [Marine Aircraft] Wing, your tour of duty as the Commander of the 2d Wing; and then you, now a major general, moved up to the Headquarters Marine Corps to run P & R, Program and Resources, in June 2000. What was your principal task and what duties were entailed in this job?

NYLAND: Well, I guess the best description that I've ever heard of ever running this was sort of a chief financial officer for the Marine Corps. I mean, you've got the checkbook, whether it's green dollars or blue dollars in support of green, and so, you become sort of a focal point for everything that's got a program element (PE) number. Everything that's funded, you become familiar with, all the process that leads to them, either continuing to be funded, or put on life support, or killed. So, in a nutshell, that's kind of it. I do have to tell you a funny story how it started though. When General [James L.] Jones was the Commandant and he came down, and after I passed the flag he promoted me to three stars.

You know, and I kept telling him I said, "You know, General Jones, this is the operating force face, (holding my hands around my face)" and he said, "I hear you, Spider, you are coming to Washington." So I go to the flight line, and you know how big General Jones is and he's standing in the doorway of the airplane, he's got one hand up here and he leans back and he looks back, and I said, "Sir, I'm really an operational kind of a guy," and he said, "Spider, pack your bags, see you in hell." So, away we went.

ALLISON: What did you think when you were promoted to three star? Did you ever think that you would be a lieutenant general in the Marine Corps?

NYLAND: I was incredibly blessed and fortunate. When I came in, I had no aspirations beyond serving in the Marine Corps. And then once I made a decision I was definitely sticking around, then my aspiration was to be a squadron commander; and then everything after that, I mean, I just was very, very fortunate. I had incredible opportunities handed to me, worked for and with incredible people, and had even better than that supporting me, so I loved it. I went to work every day with a smile on my face. Some days were longer than others, but it was just fantastic; and 37 and 1/2 years later it's--.

ALLISON: Alright. Well, you show up at Headquarters Marine Corps, and I'm sure you met with General Jones. What were his--do you recall what his instructions were to you?

NYLAND: Well, I think primarily, obviously, to keep the Marine Corps well-funded, part of that was not only developing a budget, but going to the [Capitol] Hill [Congress] and supporting a budget. One of the things that General Jones was the first to describe was, why don't we have a set four percentage GDP [gross domestic product] for Department of Defense funding. And based on that, then we calculated what it would be that the Marine Corps would need to be able to deliver everything that we thought that we should be able to do. And so, one of the first things that we did was to start to take that message to the Hill in testimony that year, the nation's defense for four percent, and I'd have to look in my notes and see exactly what number was said for the Marine Corps. But it was all based on that four percent being a steady thing instead of the ups and downs that we typically see in funding.

ALLISON: Does the Marine get four percent on DOD funded?

NYLAND: No, four percent for the department--

ALLISON: Oh, okay.

NYLAND: --of defense, and then our share would have been "X"-- to build the Marine Corps that we thought we could deliver and to do all the things like a forward-deployed expeditionary force ought to be able to do for this nation. But that was the key, I think, is making sure that we spent smart and that we took care of the Marines, and that we took care of being able to do our missions for the nation.

ALLISON: Okay. Did you feel like you had the experience and the background to do this kind of work? You're talking about spending big bucks, and all.

NYLAND: I think I was probably fortunate in the background that I had. I had--my first tour at Headquarters Marine Corps, I had been a bagman, which was basically the budget guy with General [William H.] Fitch; and I spent a lot of time on the Hill where, in fact, the guy who tutored me on what I should be doing on the Hill as a senior major and new lieutenant colonel was then Colonel Jim Jones who was in the Senate Liaison Office, so I had that background. And then as a one star, because of that background, I had worked on the joint staff in the J8, where I was--one of the divisions that worked for me was programming and budgeting, and defense issues, PBAD. And so, I had another 18 months of dealing with budgets across all the services, as well as working those same kinds of issues on the Hill.

So, when I went into P & R I felt pretty comfortable that I at least had my feet wet in enough areas that I wouldn't be totally shocked, but there was still a lot to learn. But I felt comfortable, I asked a lot of questions, and I worked with some really great people, Lee Dixon, and Paul Gido, my EA [executive assistant] and folks like that who just made a tremendous difference in my education and being able to come up to speed and defend Marine Corps programs.

ALLISON: Lee Dixon, wasn't he a Harrier pilot?

NYLAND: No, Lee Dixon was a lifelong civilian--

ALLISON: Okay, I got him mixed up.

NYLAND: Jim Jones made him an honorary Marine when he retired.

ALLISON: I thought he had been there all the time.

NYLAND: A financial wizard. He was an SES [senior executive service], and just a terrific individual and I learned an awful lot from him. And Paul Gido was a Marine colonel, artillery type, but he'd had multiple tours in P & R and he was my EA [executive assistant] and he was invaluable. I mean, there was just an awful lot of great folks down there that

helped to educate me and make sure that I didn't throw away something that the Marine Corps needed.

ALLISON: Okay. This was when that very controversial election between [George W.] Bush and [Al] Gore was happening. And then when Bush was elected was there any--did you notice any sort of a sea shift there as one administration goes out and another one comes in?

NYLAND: Yes, there was a little bit of a difference. And I knew the people in the [President William J.] Clinton administration because many of them were the same individuals that may have moved up or sideways a little bit from when I was in the J8, and so I had regular worker relationships with them. There were some new people inside the comptroller shop, but I think there was sort of the thought that when the Bush team came in that it was going to be quite like when [President Ronald] Reagan came in.

ALLISON: Oh yeah.

NYLAND: Our day is coming.

ALLISON: Happy days.

NYLAND: Yes, happy days, and we we're going to be able to buy some of these programs out that we're concerned with, and it turned out that wasn't the case.

ALLISON: What happened?

NYLAND: Well, because of Secretary [of Defense] [Donald H.] Rumsfeld, he was the guy that wanted to know in detail why for everything.

ALLISON: Got you.

NYLAND: And, as far as I remember, our first budget fight after they came in, and they had an impromptu meeting one Friday afternoon, typical, and they wanted the Commandant, the Commandant was on the road; and then they wanted the ACMC [assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps], the ACMC was on the road, so little Spider goes to present to the SecDef [Secretary of Defense] on a Friday afternoon, boom, right out of the box. I called the Commandant; he said, "Take it down there Spider; you'll do okay for us." Okay. So we went down there-- I went down there, CNO [Chief of Naval Operations] was down there and the other service chiefs, and it was good, but it did not end up being "here comes the checkbook." So we had to stay at the drawing board to make sure that we could fully articulate why certain programs were critical, why they were--important, and why we chose

the funding streams that we did in relation to across all our funding categories; who got the priorities, and why was that done.

So, while I anticipated it would be a little bit different, it was actually very much the same, except for now there were new people doing it. So it made it actually a little bit more difficult because I had known all those other folks before, PA & E [Program Analysis & Acquisition] and the comptroller shop.

ALLISON: So in this case, you didn't know how people were going to react?

NYLAND: No. We started out when the transition teams came in and we were briefing them on our programs, and we're talking these grand scales and once they started getting some sworn in officials, all of that sort of--well here comes the checkbook feeling sort of started sliding out.

ALLISON: Yes, that's what Rumsfeld's known for. The latter, he'd really dig into cuts and stuff like that.

NYLAND: Yes. He liked to understand it very, very thoroughly. And once he made up his mind, it was difficult to change it.

ALLISON: Yes, he asked a lot of questions, I've heard.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: Okay. Sir, well, you had the big programs in the works that you had to pick up and carry forward, didn't you?

NYLAND: Like the light weight 155 artillery piece, that's the M-777, the EFV [expeditionary fighting vehicle], that was a problem child.

ALLISON: The JSF [F-35, Joint Strike Fighter] was in development, I guess, at that time, and the others.

NYLAND: But we had participated shortly, well, not while I was P & R, but when I was in aviation for the down-select on the Joint Strike Fighter. So, yes, it was 2000, and doing pretty well. The EFV, that was a difficult program. And when I was in P & R, as I recall, we rebase-lined it once because of cost growth. And the Lightweight 155, which I'm happy to see is performing magnificently in the fleet, was a seen need because its transportability as compared to old 155. And so all of our programs all did pretty well with the exception of having to re-baseline that EFV, and at that point it seemed like it was a good thing to do. The technology seemed to be coming along, but just not as quickly; but then, obviously, it had

issues again further down the line and it is still a program that has not come to fruition, although the Commandant is currently working on a new addition, a new model of the EFV. So, but as far as helicopter programs, we're in pretty good shape. H-1s were coming along, four bladed [UH-1Y] H "Huey," four bladed [AH-1Z] Cobra.

ALLISON: The MV 22 [Osprey] was going through OpEval [operational evaluation] at that time, wasn't it?

NYLAND: Right. So most of them seemed to be tracking pretty well. I probably did spend more time on those blue dollar programs than I did on the green dollar programs because there was always a lot of give-and-take, you know, back and forth inside the Department [of the Navy] about what funding needed to be, and who had the priority, and what was the requirement, and what was the need.

ALLISON: When you talk about "blue" dollars, that's aviation, and what else?

NYLAND: Things like amphibs and so forth, and they calculate the split. But, yes, I mean, all your aviation programs, your aviation supply, your aviation maintenance, all of that is blue dollar. And so all of that has to be put back inside between Departments and be inside the Navy pond, as well as reflected in ours, so that takes a lot of time, a lot of work.

ALLISON: Were you getting some pushback on, like the Osprey, or any of the traditional programs there, like the Harrier?

NYLAND: Well, some of the legacy programs are, obviously, always harder to keep funded. Particularly, if it's like the Harrier, we're going to need the type model series, the Navy spares and so forth in the budget. But for the most part, I think, we were always able to reach an accommodation that nobody ever threw the book down and slammed the door on the way out.

It wasn't always easy, but we always managed to get where we needed to get and keep them funded at a pretty good level. Would we have preferred higher? You bet. But, I thought we did pretty good. I think probably the one that I remember best transitioning from P & R into [USMC Department of] Aviation that we didn't get funded early enough in my mind was the [CH-] 53K, the big heavy lift helicopter replacement. It's coming now, but it's late, we need it already. We've been retiring Echoes [CH-53E] because of the life on the folding tail in the back of the helicopter. I wish we'd found a way to get the 53K money sooner, but you can't have--every program can't be new. And I mean, by starting new, by

the time I went up there, between then and now, almost every type model series the Marine Corps has is changing.

ALLISON: Right. It's a big transition.

NYLAND: So, that means there's a lot of dollars, and you can't--you know, as my little sign "Ten Pretty Good Rules" says on one rule: "the sun doesn't shine on the same dog all the time," neither does the dollar gun, so you got to work your way around with that and see how that works out.

One of the other things, on the green side that--it was during this time, I'm pretty sure, that we were among the first to get into the PPV [public, private venture] program, which turned out to be a really terrific program for base housing and taking care of our Marines, and giving them a lot better quarters and taking better care of that side of the house; and working very closely with Lieutenant General Gary McKissock over at I&L [Installations and Logistics]; and it turned out to be, and still is, a pretty much banner program for us.

We partner with a commercial industry, usually it's a 50 year lease on the houses and they get the BAQ/BAH [basic allowance for quarters/housing], and then they maintain the common areas, they keep the place up. So, it took an incredible burden off base commanders, and also allowed us to move into some pretty nice quarters in a much shorter order than you know normal work MilCon [military construction] takes forever, it's not a popular funding stream, it doesn't get a lot of attention on the Hill. And so, the PPV, because it was such a partnership, we've got a lot of accolades on the Hill as well, so we were able to put people in new quarters much more quickly than had we just gone the old MilCon route and MilCon would've had to compete against war fighting equipment, and then still would have to go to the Hill, where is wasn't necessarily glamorous, and not often well funded.

ALLISON: You said the Marine Corps was one of the leaders to first get into that. Who was behind that? Was that General McKissock?

NYLAND: Well, he was the driver for us. And, I mean, the DON, the Department of the Navy, as a whole, we were kind of some leaders in this. We started out on the West Coast, and did some wonderful work; and, it's everywhere now, and they are terrific. I mean, I remember Quantico, what Lymon Park used to look like when I was a lieutenant. And then when my son-in-law was a captain going to EWS, Expeditionary Warfare School, I went and

stayed at his house in Lymon Park, it was pretty nice. It was not like what I remembered, a lot different--so it turned out to be a really, really beneficial effort.

ALLISON: Any comments on the H-1 program that was in the works at that time?

NYLAND: You know it's just a program that always had make great sense to us. I mean, it originated under Lieutenant General Harry Blot when he was head of Marine aviation; and it took those two airplanes and made them, not only more capable, which was certainly well needed, with the engine upgrades and the four blades, but it made them about 85 percent common, which meant that we could now merge training for UH-1, AH-1, huge savings there and then huge savings, in particular, on the amphib ships from packing for your supply support because now instead of carrying three kind of generators, you're carry one generator that works, for both.

It was a great program. It made great sense, and we kept it going but we never had the dollars to push it out really, really quickly. But now, they're both flying, they're doing a magnificent job. The Huey in particular, because it's actually, in many circumstances, got more capability than the CH-46 does now because they're so old and tired. So it's picking up sort of a sub-medium helicopter role, as well as still doing the command and control and armed reconnaissance. So it's turned out to be everything I think that we hoped it would be. I know the young folks that are flying them have big grins on their face. They do great.

ALLISON: How many troops can it carry out, the new one?

NYLAND: I think 14. I'm not positive, now. So, let's see, I'd have to go look, that may be high. It may be still be about seven or eight, but it's got fuel and the legs, and--.

ALLISON: And speed.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: But the [CH-] 46 can only carry a squad.

NYLAND: Well, it was typically designed for a squad, and now it's even hard to put a squad in there and all their gear.

ALLISON: Right. And fly out to the mountains of Afghanistan.

NYLAND: Yes, at altitude.

ALLISON: Yes. Well, I guess you kind of needed an aircraft like that nowadays.

NYLAND: Well, I mean, it's a nice fit with the V-22 because of the capabilities and the fact that the V-22 certainly exceeds what the CH-46, the old Phrog, could do. And now with the

four bladed Huey, it's kind of just at the at the lower end of what the Phrog wasn't able to do, it makes it kind of nice pairing with the V-22 because it just--it's easy to find a niche for both of them, as well as to find a wide-open comparison.

ALLISON: Now, during this time, unfortunately, you had the Osprey crashes, one at Marana and then one outside of Cherry Point there in December. So that had to have some sort of an impact, and then there was the huge controversy with CBS news, the bad publicity.

NYLAND: Well, yes, there was--.

ALLISON: With the tape that was sent into--who was that sent in, to Sixty Minutes by the Marine mechanic?

NYLAND: Well, the problem in many cases is the news media really thrives on sensationalism.

And sadly, there was an awful lot of that. In this case there were critics who refused to sit down and understand what was really going on. I think one of the great things that General Jones did as Commandant was, he put together this blue ribbon panel, and it was led by two very distinguished guys, Norm Augustine and General [John] "Jack" Dailey.

ALLISON: Right.

NYLAND: And when they came out and put out their report and looked at the things that were being done, I mean, it gave a much more balanced view. And there was one fellow in particular who considered himself a rotary wing expert, and he created his red ribbon panel and just, like a dog worrying a bone, would never admit that this airplane had all the potential that we had seen for years.

So there was some areas that needed some work; you know, wiring inside in the nacelles and how that was made to look and be much more functional and much more able to trace it as opposed to, well, we'll make one those and we'll wire that in.

ALLISON: This that and all that layering.

NYLAND: But I think the airplane has more than proven itself now, and the capability that it brings is phenomenal. We're now looking at the Israelis, Qatar, UAE [United Arab Emirates], all interested in buying it, Japan is now looking at it after we went and landed on one of their ships here last week.

I mean, the capability with its range and its speed, and load carrying capacity is truly magnificent. It's all those things that we had hoped it would be, and it just took a little longer to get there and to get it right, but I think we have a real winner.

ALLISON: It seems like one of the things that came out of those crashes was that they went back to the drawing board and really worked out maybe some other particular problems.

NYLAND: Well, they really did. I mean, there were some flight software issues that they worked out because that was part of the mishap that had happened outside Cherry Point and New River, the default lights and the way those reacted inside the system if they were reset. So, they rescrubbed all of the software. They certainly rescrubbed inside in the nacelles so that instead of opening up the hood and seeing, whoa, where does everything go? Now when you open up a nacelle, it's like looking in a Jaguar. I mean, it looks professional, it looks put in the right places, and you can actually trace lines, reasonably and logically.

So, was there some good that came out of those panels? Absolutely. Always tragic to have lost any lives, but I think those lives that were lost, their efforts, made possible an incredible asset for this nation.

ALLISON: Right. Probably got through one of the best safety records for a new aircraft, if not the best ever.

NYLAND: It's really incredible. If my memory serves me right, three crashes prior to introduction, in Marana, the one there, and then there was an earlier one in Quantico where a nacelle pooled hyd fluid then caught fire. But I mean, I look back and I don't know how many F-4s we lost before we fielded them.

ALLISON: Even a safe airplane, like an A-4.

NYLAND: Yes, A-4s. But, and we have a tendency, many do, to become enamored with the technology. We think the technology is terrific and there's not going to be any growing pains; this is going to be perfect right out of the box.

ALLISON: Oh yeah.

NYLAND: I'm going to build a one-eighth scale model and it'll be perfect in every way my first try. Well, turns out, most things that are worth having are hard and building an airplane, certainly, with new technology, there are going to be lessons learned. I mean, that's why we test them, that's why we have developmental testing, that's why we have operational testing.

And I think the history will show, if you lay the Osprey against most other airplanes that everybody loved dearly, F-8s, F-4s, A-4s, look at the early 46s--

ALLISON: Oh, yeah, terrible.

NYLAND: --[F-14] Tomcat. You will find that the Osprey stacks up very, very well against all of them.

ALLISON: Even the C-130.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: I looked at some stats. The Osprey's first 100,000 hours, no crashes where the KC-130 had some.

NYLAND: Yes, it's unfortunate that a lot of times the, well, the sensational side takes precedence over the facts, and that's just the nature of the beast. It's unfortunate; I don't think that's going to change. So, I think what you have to do is you have to have your facts, and you have to continue to repeat the facts that are verifiable.

ALLISON: It seems to be a lot of political opposition to the Osprey.

NYLAND: Well, it was. Of course you know, then, Secretary [of Defense] [Richard B.] "Dick" Cheney and Dr. David Chu, in PA&E [Program Analysis and Evaluation], they killed it a couple of times. Then, he was vice president, I don't know that he was enamored with that initially, but I think all of them now would probably took a look and say, "Wow, I'm glad they persevered." We've given an incredible capability to the military, and I think to many of our allies and our foreign partners because it looks like people have really seen this. I mean, I have always--.

ALLISON: They're finally convinced.

NYLAND: Well, I think so. And I mean, I think there's still a great commercial application. You look at Reagan [International Airport] and the ability to want to keep that place safe. Why couldn't Reagan be an all tilt rotor field that took people to other airfields to join up with the airplanes that make the long flights, Dulles, BWI [Baltimore, Washington International airport], Raleigh, or Charlotte?

ALLISON: Right.

NYLAND: I mean, you--I could see a lot of utility, and I think I'm happy and pleased to see that the airplane is finally getting the kind of recognition that it deserves. And wow, look at this capability set and what this brings to the war fight, and potentially, to commercial use.

ALLISON: Right. It's pretty amazing to me that the Marine Corps was lead on this, of course with the Department of the Navy there supporting.

NYLAND: You know, early on when I was a major in aviation, every--all the services were in on this. I mean, the Army with the modern technology engine, the Air Force was in, the Navy was in, the Marines were in. That's when we had the XV-15 flying. And then the Army went the light helicopter attack route and it came out of the engine business, and so we kind of went it alone with the Department of the Navy for a lot of years; and then--.

ALLISON: With Secretary of the Navy [John F.] Lehman. [Jr]

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: Threw the ball to the Marine Corps there, I believe, on that, didn't he?

NYLAND: Yes, he did. But, he was really good because he liked to listen to the facts, and listen to the arguments, and then make informed decisions. He was a great supporter of MAWTS [Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1] for the Marines. He loved what he saw out there, train-the-trainer and the professionalism associated with that, and he was a big supporter there as well for us; and he did a lot of really good things for the Marine Corps.

ALLISON: Okay, sir. Well, anything else on the programs there that comes to mind? The KC 130-J, was there anything particular with that?

NYLAND: Well, just that it was a wonderful airplane. Our 130s were probably close to 40 years old already. And when I was CG [Commanding General] 2d MAW, I remember going out in a [F/A-18] Hornet and refueling off the same KC-130 that I refueled off as a first lieutenant in Vietnam.

ALLISON: Really!

NYLAND: You know, I pull up there, and I go to bureau number (Basketball) 686, wow, unbelievable.

ALLISON: You remember the aircraft number?

NYLAND: Yeah, I remember. I have a problem with I remember numbers. My wife has another name for it; I think OCD [obsessive compulsion disorder] or something like that. But anyway, things like that kind of stick with me and so our airplanes were old and the [KC-130] J has turned out to be just an incredible workhorse.

In fact it almost should've been called something other than a 130 because it's so dramatically different other than its appearance. But, I was fortunate enough I had a chance to fly it a couple times and then fly it over in Iraq a couple of times.

ALLISON: So you were CG when it came in, when it was--

NYLAND: Well, when I first--I first flew it when I was--

ALLISON: At Headquarters [Marine Corps].

NYLAND: Yes, General Jones was the Commandant, and I can't remember if I was P&R or aviation. Anyway, we were on our way to a three star off-site in the Gulfstream, when we got a hydraulic leak, we had to put it down in [Naval Air Station Patuxent] "Pax" River. We had a hydraulic light right after we took out of Andrews [Air Force Base], and so we're calling around looking for a way to get to--we were going to New River and they had--they got one of the J models that was there going through testing--

ALLISON: At Pax River?

NYLAND: At Pax. And so, they said, "Hey, we've got to take it out, we could drop the Commandant and his team off if they'd like." And so we scurried around and got that all set up and we got up there, and of course sit in the back and the Commandant is sitting in the jump seat watching everything, and the pilot called back to me and said, "Do you want to fly it?" And the Commandant said, "I didn't sign up for him to fly this." So, that was the first time I flew it, and boy what a sweet machine. And my son-in-law is the J pilot and so--,

ALLISON: Oh yeah. Now, what's his name?

NYLAND: Major Ben Grant. So that's another one that came to fruition that's just been an incredible workhorse. I mean it's done yeoman's work for us, as did the F model, and R model, and the T model in Reserves. But, you know, the desired end state now is to get the J model into the Reserves as well. So, once again, the same goal that we've had for years with the Joint Strike Fighter is a single type, model, series -- reduce those numbers so that we can continue to give the bang for the buck, the money that people deserve.

ALLISON: Yes necking down. Yes, I remember you saying we're at a point, maybe it's when you were running Aviation, you said, we're at a point where we're transforming all Marines--every program in Marine aviation, I mean we were right in the midst of it right at that time, just sort of fighting those battles--.

NYLAND: Well, we were--,

ALLISON: We had the war was going on at the same time. But now it sort of is upon us.

NYLAND: It's upon us. I mean, it is really big time upon us. We have the H-1 flying, those models.

ALLISON: It's come through.

NYLAND: Well it has. Well, I've got to tell you, we've just had incredible support from the Commandants, and incredible guys and gals in the Aviation Department and in the P & R Department; and we had a vision, we had a story, and we stuck to it, which is one of the reasons that we get respected on the Hill, we don't switch around based on political polls or anything else. We saw this need a long time ago, and this was the vision, and now we are well into executing it, which is pretty impressive when you think about it.

ALLISON: And if you look at it, it goes all the way back to--coming right out of Vietnam when I think General [Thomas H.] Miller sort of had a vision there.

NYLAND: General Miller, and especially General Fitch. When I was a major working in Aviation is when we devised the neck down strategy. That's when we were talking, then it was, JST, before it was JSF, it was JAST [joint advanced strike technology] before that, when it was an R&D project. But the vision of getting rid of all the type, model, series and getting down to as few as possible, and on the fixed wing side, basically, getting down to two, 130s and the JSF for fixed wing aviation. And then things like we did with the H-1 family, making it so common that it's almost like having a single type, model, series, not quite, but--and then having our heavy lift and the V-22. So I mean, we have--we've stuck true to that vision that began back with General Miller, and General Fitch. Passed on from one to the next.

ALLISON: One Commandant, one leader of Marine Aviation. Anywhere along the line somebody could have said, "Hey, this is not working," and go to the [UH-60] Black Hawk or something like that.

NYLAND: Yes, well there were a lot of people that would like to have liked us to do that. I mean, David Chu, when he was at PA & E, that was his proposal, that we would kill the V-22 and get a bunch of Black Hawks and a few more 53s. But, that didn't fit the vision or the requirement for the across-the-board capability of the MAGTF [Marine air-ground task force], be it ashore, afloat, or moving between back and forth.

ALLISON: What was neat about it is that it sort of married up with a new vision on the ground side of their maneuver warfare, with Commandants like [General Charles C.] Krulak and General [Carl E.] Mundy, and General [Alfred M.] Gray, especially. General Gray talked about this maneuver warfare, so that was sort of moving along on the ground side in the aviation.

NYLAND: Yes, it was interesting for years; aviation was considered a supporting arm. But you saw it come to fruition in Desert Shield/Desert Storm; even more so in Iraq, where it became a maneuver element. So, 3rd MAW in Iraq took care of the right flank. That allowed I MEF [Marine Expeditionary Force] to go up to Baghdad. So it's still always there in support of that rifleman because that's who we are. But it's now gone from just a support organization to being an offensive organization as well from the standpoint of being one just like a maneuver unit. And so, pretty neat evolution of both the assets inside aviation and the MAGTF at large to do combat.

HEFFERNAN: Can I ask one?

NYLAND: Yes.

HERVAMAN: Will the Marine Corps ever consider the [AH-64] Apache Longbow?

NYLAND: I think not. I think one reason it would be yet another type, model, series into the equation. And now we've got the four-bladed Cobra doing great. I think the other is, when you do that, maintenance issues, supply issues, when you become a single type, model, series in a service, it makes it really, really tough. And I think we think that our weapons, coupled with what we can do with the Cobra in that fight, as well as the Longbow would, obviously, be taking away from the over horizon kind of thing. But that's not how we normally utilize that Cobra anyway. And so, I think for us, I just don't see that as an option; and I think we're really happy with this four-bladed Cobra and we'll just ensure that both the tactics, techniques, procedure, and the weapons meet the threat as we think we're going to have to face it.

HEFFERNAN: Well, and the Cobra/Huey combos that you send out.

NYLAND: Yes. That's a good combo, and the Cobra, with the V-22; although it can't keep up, it can certainly be stationed ahead and you can leapfrog and do a pass and review sort of escort role. You can use the JSF to go with V-22 because of its capabilities. I mean they all sort of marry in there together. There might be--in my mind, there might yet still be a role

for maybe a smaller V-22 in an escort role, a little more nimble, not quite as big of an airframe, maybe somewhere between the XV-15 and the MV-22 in size because while we did away with the OV-10s, there still turns out to be an awful lot of requirement to be able to have some persistence and surveillance on the battlefield and ID [identify] things. And so, I think you could get, you could get yourself an escort capability V-22 like aircraft, that could do a lot of those missions for you; have speed, have that on-station time and range.

So that would be a more likely. But right now, I gotta tell you, I don't know what's going to happen with the sequestration and everything. I think new starts are going to be gone for a long time. And my theory is right now, the industries that can take legacy platforms and ensure that they remain operationally ready and maintainable, and then enhance their weapon systems, are going to be the guys that win out in the long haul. The programs that are in place I think will stay in place. But over time, I don't know when we'll see a whole lot of new starts. I just, I don't know.

ALLISON: The JSF might be the last tactical jet we're going to see in a long time.

NYLAND: I think it's got the potential to be one of the last for a while, that and the Super Hornet [F/A-18E and F]. I mean, everything else and they're going to become legacy before you know it. You know, we might get a new manned bomber, mainly because we only have so few of the B-2s, and the B-1s have become sort of limited. And some day, I mean, if you've ever looked at the wrinkles on the B-52, you've gotta believe that someday we can't keep extending the life on that. Although it's a great capability and it looks terrific airborne. Well, I tell you what, it's impressive when you watch one of those things taking off.

ALLISON: I'd like to ask about special operations. They were coming into vogue, and it seemed like it was being foisted on the Marine Corps. Do you remember anything about that during that time? I just know that it was one of the big issues that the Commandant was dealing with.

NYLAND: Well, there's always that in the background about why are the Marines the only ones that don't have forces--any special forces. But of course, we felt like our MEU(SOCs), [Marine expeditionary units, special operations capable], filled that niche. I mean the real move into MarSOC [Marine Special Operations Command] happened actually when I was ACMC with Secretary Rumsfeld. That's when we really got down to the nuts and bolts, and

the two that really wrestled with that were [Michael W.] "Mike" Hagee, as the Commandant, and Doug Brown, as the head SOCom [Special Operations Command].

But there has always been that, "why don't you contribute to forces?" We had force recon and we had MEU (SOCs). But I think where we are now is pretty good. We can talk about it more later but it just took a while to get there.

ALLISON: Another controversial issue though.

NYLAND: There's some controversy because of how it might be used or not used. You know, I can be pretty candid about it; the Marine Corps greatest concern was that any HHQ [higher headquarters] would, cherry pick assets, which would leave our overall units in the MAGTF less capable. So you send the MAGTF out and somebody says, "Well, I'll take eight of those airplanes." Well, then how would it be, how do we employ the MAGTF? I mean, so it's--some of those things--and we've worked our way through some of that and we've enhanced designations to do things a different way. But, I think where we are is good, but that was one of the reasons it was always, okay, if I've got one--if I've got a direct action platoon, but if you take him out, one of my companies is short a platoon. If I put a company ashore, I'm short a platoon. How do you deal with that? I mean, so do we want to have an asset out here that we're going to diminish its overall capability because the decision was made that this priority for that 50 man outfit was more important over here? Or is there a way where we can accommodate both? So, I think we're doing pretty good now, but there's always a concern that the--,

ALLISON: They're going to tear apart the MAGTF.

NYLAND: --the MAGTF would come apart; and then we spent all this time training, and certifying them, and sending them over there, and then they come back and the commander wants them for certain capability, and now they may not be able to deliver.

ALLISON: Right. It's been going on almost since the inception of the MAGTF.

NYLAND: Yes. Well, it's because unless you've lived it, you don't often gather an appreciation for the synergy that the elements of the MAGTF bring together, and how well they train together, how they support each other, and how it operates. And on a much larger scale, that's always the same question that you're familiar with--why do the Marines have to have their own air support airplanes? Why can't somebody else do that for them?

ALLISON: Why do we need a fourth Air Force?

NYLAND: Exactly. I mean, every time I went to the Hill, I got that question from one committee. The first question out of the box, the chairman asked that every year.

ALLISON: Really? What the Senate arms--the--

NYLAND: It was Readiness Subcommittee of the SASC [Senate Armed Services Committee] or HASC [House Armed Services Committee], but you know ---

ALLISON: I have never been able to tell really, is it ever one political party as opposed to another?

NYLAND: No, I don't think so. I mean, I just think that people look for where can I get money, and they look at the big budget items, and they're opposed to big budget items. And so on, so they say well you have four Air Forces. Well, the truth is, if you look at the requirements across what the nation needs, somebody's gotta have those airplanes. I mean, and oh by the way, we operate them at a better rate and cost per flight hour than anybody else.

ALLISON: That's sort of the trump card.

NYLAND: And, the Marines are trained together to do this, and we gave up our heavy artillery to do this. So there's a lot of logic behind it, but it's an easy target because it's big bucks. I mean, APN money, aircraft procurement Navy, or any aircraft procurement for the other guys have big dollars.

ALLISON: Okay, sir. Alright. I noticed in the General Jones interview he decried the acquisition process, and he had hoped that it could be streamlined or reformed while he was Commandant. What are your thoughts on that? What are the big problems with the acquisition process in the military?

NYLAND: Yes, I think there are a couple of problems. And one of the ones that General Jones was also speaking to is, the Goldwater/Nichols Bill basically took service chief out of the process. But when those airplanes crashed, they didn't call the head of NavAir [Naval Aviation], they called the Commandant. So, what's the proper role for the service chief and/or his designate in that acquisition process? Because part of Goldwater/Nichols was aligned up all the acquisition process in the systems command, to include MarCorSysCom [Marine Corps Systems Command].

So, what's the fit? To the specifics of the acquisition, I think part of the problem is, number one, there's just--there's so many rules and regulations, I don't know how you're

supposed to keep up with them. I mean, it's like the fire is just out of control. And I think one of the things that happens when you have so many of those and you don't understand them, what do you do? You become like the raccoon club, I've got a secret, and people don't talk; because they're afraid if I talk, I might be in violation of something. So my thing is, those guys and gals ought to be talking every day; I mean, there shouldn't be a surprise that comes up after months of silence and say, oh man, we have--or you have a really big problem. Oh I do? How about you, what are you doing, what are the solutions to this, and why am I finding out about it after three months of reading everything's "A" plus, and all green stop signs? So I think the regulations have stifled the communications because people don't know. Can I talk to them about that, geez is this a RFI [request for information], is this a RFP [request for proposal], did he get that same information from my competitor? And even once its signed, I don't think there's enough to hold on. To me communications is so key to what we do, whether it's fighting the force, or buying the force, or fielding the force, and I think we've frightened many people out of the communication mode because somebody is going to say "Well, you had no business talking to them about that, or that's in violation of paragraph X, Y Alpha 22 of [FAR] Chapter 11." So, I think we've just overdone it.

What we need to do is get back to common sense and sit down and look somebody in Program Management the eye, and say, "I do not expect any surprises." I don't want to go along with three months of green charts and then you come in here and tell me there's a problem. And I don't want to learn there's a problem for my major down there who calls me outside the channel and says there's a problem coming. You know, you as a program manager, I want you in here talking to me, as the program manager, I expect you to be talking to industry. I don't think we do enough in that regard, and I think we don't because we don't know if we're going to be within the lines as painted by all the acquisition regulations.

ALLISON: What does FAR stand for?

NYLAND: Federal Acquisition Regulation.

ALLISON: Thank you.

NYLAND: That's my view. And then the other piece, which of course, was General Jones's point, first you take me out of it, and then now you want me to be responsible. What's the

right role? I mean, what is the blend? And I think there's been some progress made in that, certainly in the last five or six years. It may have not come to fruition while General Jones was still Commandant, but I think we've seen a movement towards there has to be, there has to be play with the warfighting side, not just the acquisition side of these as these things are developed.

ALLISON: Okay. SysCom; did you--how much did you interact with SysCom, and how did that play in with your role as the leader of P & R?

NYLAND: A lot of interaction with SysCom because, basically, SysCom had all the green dollar programs, ammo, vehicles, and radars. So, a pretty good healthy sustained interaction with MARCORSYSCOM.

ALLISON: Okay. Command-and-control.

NYLAND: Right. With all the command and control, main CAC2S, the common aviation command-and-control system, all radar setups, HAWKs when we had them, Stingers when we--just everything from, 155 rounds to small arms ammunition. And, so yes, a lot of time with the SysCom folk, and that was another thing, I learned a lot of--.

ALLISON: Who was was running the SysCom at that time?

NYLAND: [William D.] "Bill" Catto was one of them, and then [Dr. James L.] "Jim" Finley, I think those were the two main ones; there were probably a couple of others that escape me right now. But, yeah, there was probably a lot of interaction.

ALLISON: I think you've already said it, but that was easier than the green--that's the green dollars--

NYLAND: Well, the--inside of the Marine Corps, of course, we had our own process for developing the green dollar POM [Program Objective Memorandum], and it had been used for many many years; and we were pretty practiced at it, we were pretty smooth at it. And we were able to sit down with all the stakeholders and articulate priorities and get agreement, and move forward. But, yes, it was--I learned a lot from the SysCom folks.

ALLISON: I guess the biggest--the most controversial issue would've been the EFV [expeditionary fighting vehicle], or the AAAV [advanced amphibious assault vehicle], as they were calling it then?

NYLAND: Yes, but at that point, it was still the AAAV, and we had a couple of them swimming there in the river north of Quantico, and it seemed to be developing pretty well.

The gun system was coming along. And it probably--like I said, as I recall when I was P & R, we rebase-lined it once. But it probably was a couple years later than that when it started to have issues, when they started to get into sea trials on the West Coast and it had some issues about getting up on plane, and reliability. It's still seemed pretty solid, as I recall when I was P & R. And then, I remember as I was ACMC we started having more difficulties with it.

ALLISON: Were there any other issues inside the Marine Corps? Any controversies as far as developing new programs or any programs actually?

NYLAND: I don't think so at that point. I think it was just trying to maintain a readiness across the board. We've never been much for tiered readiness because we figure we're the ones that are going out the door first, period. So, maintaining the readiness and then, as I mentioned earlier, this idea if OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] were to get a consistent four percent of GDP [gross domestic product], and then the services got access to what they and especially the Marine Corps would deliver, that was our message.

ALLISON: It would give something to plan on.

NYLAND: But it was--I don't think there were any real controversies right then. Of course, we hadn't had 9/11, and we had started all the other war excitement. So it was an administration change, and there was the hope that the big checkbook would once again come out and we could move our programs forward. But, I can't think of anything--any particularly contentious hearings or anything, just readiness I would say.

ALLISON: Was there the impression on the eve of the global war on terrorism that the Marine Corps was ridden hard and was tired, already? You know, because of the 1990s, it'd been really busy with all the humanitarian operations and Kosovo, Bosnia, you've got Somalia going on, Haiti, and all these contingency operations.

NYLAND: You know, I hadn't ever thought of it in that way, and I guess my gut reaction is no, because, I mean, I think that's what we thought we did. That's what we thought we did better than anybody else it would be forward deployed naval forces that did these things. I think the number of operations for forward deployed forces, for the last 15 or 20 years exceeds 250 operations, I think, is the last number I saw. So, people really don't have an appreciation, I don't think, for naval forces. I mean, the beauty of naval forces, when that carrier battle group sails out, or that MEU sails out, they're paid for. I mean, they don't have

to wait for special funding, they don't have to wait for special sustainment, they are out there and they're ready to do things for the nation right now. And they do them, and as a result, they don't get a lot of hoopla, except from the people they save. Now, they're happy. I mean, all those embassies they get evacuated, or they go to a disaster zone and set up tent camps and bring in doctors, and dentists, and priests and do things, those people are very happy; but it's almost as though that doesn't rise to the level of sensationalism, so it doesn't get a lot of billing.

In my humble opinion, there is no dollar better spent for this nation than for forward deployed naval expeditionary forces. They bring it all, and it can be handing out milk one day, to breaking the door down the next, and it's ready to go, it's trained to do it.

ALLISON: And it's paid for, an interesting point.

NYLAND: I rest my case. When you start the fire up other folks, not that they don't have great capability, and we need those capabilities particularly for the sustained go. But the first thing they have--then they gotta get TAD [temporary additional duty] to go somewhere; and then they got to start training to do that mission to go somewhere; and then they have to be moved there to go do that.

ALLISON: All that special money they gotta get.

NYLAND: So an appropriation is needed, particularly, after the first 30 days. But, who's going to be there when the sun gets up? It's going to be forward deployed naval expeditionary forces because the sun never sets on them. Who's going to be in there first? So why don't we fund them to do that properly, adequately? Because to me, that's the best deal America gets for a dollar.

Our utility is incredible. We can figure out if we've got 30 days; oh, by the way, that buys time for the Commander-In-Chief to make the right decision instead of having to hurry up. The services can figure out how to get out this stuff there for the long haul, while we've got that forward piece under control.

ALLISON: So, the Marine Corps and the Navy, they'd buy 30 days, the window of time, to get the right forces mobilized.

NYLAND: Absolutely. And then, oh by the way, we can also be sustained with the stuff we already have as well. So I mean, if it has to go 45 days before we can move in the brigades,

the heavy brigades, or the, you know, the F-15s, or the F-22s, okay, that's what we're designed for.

ALLISON: Do you think Congress--from your perception, does Congress appreciate that?

NYLAND: I don't think so.

ALLISON: So there's this constant budget figuring out what's going on?

NYLAND: I think it's always an education process with Congress, particularly with the staffers. A lot of the young staffers don't have any military service, haven't studied it, and understanding how all the pieces of what the nation brings fit together, I think, is a continuing process for them. And I--candidly, I think sometimes some of the members get too focused on what's important to my district as opposed to what's important for the nation.

ALLISON: Yes. That's got to be a huge temptation if your congressman is worried about getting reelected.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: Well, that pretty much brings us to the end of your time as P & R. General, do you have any other comments on what you think is important that we hadn't talked about or--

NYLAND: No, I think, I look over my notes here, but I think that's about--that was great. That was a great learning experience.

ALLISON: You were living at Bolling at the time?

NYLAND: Yes, I was living at Bolling Air Force Base at one set of quarters over there, and I was only there just one short of the year I guess. Commandant told me, "Okay, Quarters Four is opened at the barracks. I want you to move over to the Barracks." That was about the same time I moved over to Aviation.

ALLISON: Alright. Well, we can jump into that, or we can take a break if you like, because we've got about 45 minutes or so before lunch time.

NYLAND: Okay.

ALLISON: So if you want to go ahead and jump into your tour as Deputy Commandant for Aviation?

NYLAND: Sure.

ALLISON: Alright. Well, what did you think? Did you have any inkling that you were going to be going to--I mean, you're still working for General Jones, right?

NYLAND: Right, General Jones is the Commandant.

ALLISON: General Hagee didn't come in until 2003--

NYLAND: General Jones was nominated and became SACEur [Supreme Allied Command, Europe] and left in January of 2003. Yes, so I'm in there with some rumors. There's always rumors running around hallways that I might go to Aviation, and Fred McCorkle was Aviation and he and I were like blood brothers ever since we were majors in Aviation together in the early 1980s.

ALLISON: He was working for General [William H.] Fitch too?

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: What a team.

NYLAND: Oh yeah, we had a heck of a team.

ALLISON: General Fitch talked about that.

NYLAND: Well, he had--it was me, there was Fred, there was Pat Finneran, there was [Jefferson D.] "Beak" Howell, [Norman E.] "Skunk" Ehlert, [J.P.] "Monk" Monroe, [Robert] "Bob" Magnus, [David] "Dave" Seder, Terry Mattke, Bill Egan, Charlie Carr, Monte Tennes, Dave Jones, I mean, so I'll say at least--it was pretty great. But back to Fred and I, we spent a lot of time together because I was the P & R and he had to make sure I was current on the blue dollar issues and supporting him and his efforts. So that was sort of a logical move, and I had had time in there before.

ALLISON: But that must have killed him though when those Ospreys crashed.

NYLAND: Yes, I mean, it was such a tragedy and, those were very, very tough times. God bless their souls.

ALLISON: Yes, just looking from the outside, I would think that that was probably a bottoming out time there for everybody, all the leadership and everything, because the way the media came after all the people.

NYLAND: [Mike] Wallace and those guys.

ALLISON: Were you glad to be going to Aviation?

NYLAND: Well sure. I mean, I was glad to still be in uniform and serving, it was terrific. And of course Aviation, having served in there before, and I knew that everything was in good shape because Fred, he, we worked as hard as any two people to make sure that it was, and so it was exciting. We've been to Aviation. Of course, we had a brand new building, brand new wing, and the brand new section in the Pentagon.

ALLISON: That was sort of the temporary building there, right, or something?

NYLAND: Uh no. We were in the first wedge. It was being renovated.

ALLISON: This was August 2001.

NYLAND: So, in fact, I think--I was only in the office about a month before we got hit.

ALLISON: And that's where it hit.

NYLAND: Yes. So, it was Peter Murphy's office, and it was mine.

ALLISON: Wow.

NYLAND: And mine was the last in the wedge. So this area over right beside was the next wedge to be done, so it was vacant, fortunately. But the difference between what this office looked like, what this over here looked like after that impact was phenomenal. I mean, this over here was burned, gutted. Over here where we had fire retardant drywall and we had these windows that were reinforced, and these 1000 pound beams. When we finally got to go back in there, I guess about three weeks later, to try and gather up some personal things, I mean, I have my medical records in my files, and my uniforms, and stuff in there, you would've thought that you could go in there, if you just dust off the dust, and if the mold were killed, go to work. But structurally, it wasn't totally sound in the decking. But that's the difference in the work that those engineers had done when they rehabbed that place, because this section next was just a disaster zone. Glass gone, firewalls crumpled, and so it was a tribute to what they had done. In fact, I remember one building there with one lady engineer, and she said, "You know, they were always after us we were taking too long." And I said, "You want to have them talk to me, I'll tell him I think you did a great job, because here I am gathering up stuff that's important to me, and I'm looking at what's right over here-gone." So, that was--yeah, that was something.

ALLISON: On that day, that was a Tuesday.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: September 11th. Do you remember what was going on that day? Were you in the office?

NYLAND: No. I had gotten a haircut about 5:30, and I had a 6:30 meeting that got cancelled, so I took the chance to go to the POAC. I went down there and I had come back from a run and was in that--was dressed and heading back to the office when the whoomp, and so I started moving faster and people said, "That well, there's been an explosion in the

center courtyard." And I was trying to go down the hallway where the NATO flags were, and all of a sudden they're pushing back, "No, you can't go this way, you can't go this way." So, I doubled back and I was going to go down by the library and come around, and they got that blocked. And they ultimately pushed all of us out of the building and we were pushed out the river entrance.

So, I walked around the river to the mall. When I'm in the--towards the end of the mall that's closest to Washington Boulevard, over by the mall parking lot, you started to see all this junk lying in there. When I turned the corner, then you could see where that plane went into the building and after it bounced right off the little pad that--the helo pad that was there, it was right into my office, and I thought, oh my God, I'm never going to see those people again. And but there were chunks of metal out there lying in the thing--

ALLISON: From the airplane, or--

NYLAND: Yes. But, fortunately, my aide, Phil "Zimmy" Zimmerman, he was in there, and my EA was in there and two secretaries, they all got knocked to the floor, but got up and crossed the passageway, we had about ten more Marines over there in the admin section, and he rallied them all up and got them out. He had an apartment--he was a bachelor, had an apartment right there in Crystal City and he got them all--I didn't know this for five or six hours, but he got them all at his apartment, all accounted for. A couple of Marines went back and actually were helping people get in and out of the rubble. In fact, one of them took off his utility coat, and they found the coat later with his name on it and there was a search, "is he okay?", and "yes, he is okay," but he had taken it off because it was just so hot and so intense in there.

And it took me, I mean, I was out there and I saw that. And I tried to borrow somebody's cell phone and see if I can make any contact with anybody or anything. It took me--finally, I cut through the cemetery, I cut across the park there, and up through the cemetery and got out and went up to the--our old headquarters up at the Navy Annex, and I got in there and I was the last one that showed up from the building. Peter Murphy right before me, I mean, they didn't know--and this is some three or four hour afterwards, they didn't know if we had made it or not. And, well, there was a whole different set of panic at home where all my kids were. But--.

ALLISON: So your kids were home at that time?

NYLAND: No.

ALLISON: Oh, they had gone to college, right?

NYLAND: They were calling from around the globe. It was unbelievable. I mean, cell phones didn't work. I mean, I finally got through by using a military line from the Headquarters to my house at Bolling to get ahold of Brenda and tell her I was okay. And of course, she had already had calls that said, "Hey, we--have you heard from Spider, we know that the plane went in right by his office," which wasn't--didn't help. So, anyway, that was incredible. On the lighter side, because of that, I ended up, while I was at Headquarters Marine Corps as a three star and a four star, I moved eight times.

ALLISON: Did you really?

NYLAND: So, I moved old P & R, new P & R, new Aviation, then we went into that big Butler building in the parking lot in south parking. We all joked why didn't you just put a target on it? And then we went to a place up on the fifth deck in the D and E ring, then back into the office. And then I went to the ACMC office, then I had to move to a little bitty office while they redid the ACMC's office, and then finally back to the ACMC's office.

ALLISON: Holy cow.

NYLAND: Well, but that day, I'll never forget that day. All my kids always call on that day.

ALLISON: Oh, do they?

NYLAND: Yes. And once again, I was very blessed. All my people--I mean, even the office next to me, Peter Murphy, so if you see that picture with the flag, that Marine, flag right there, that's Peter's office. Peter was right there, and then our office was next, and it just sheared off.

ALLISON: Well, how soon were you able to go back to work.? I assume you went back the next day?

NYLAND: We brought--Vernon Clark was CNO and, so, Jim Jones offered, he and his staff, space up there with us. We moved up to the old headquarters, and we were probably up there, about, I want to say maybe three weeks or four weeks--

ALLISON: Over the Navy Annex?

NYLAND: Yes, before we went back down. Now, I think CNO and the Commandant, their offices were okay so they went down more quickly than that. But, what they did was they

made room for us in that big Butler building in south parking for Aviation. And to do that, they had to reorder some things so we could have some secure spaces and everything. So I mean, as part as going back to live work, the next day, I mean, I could even get my vehicle, my vehicle was in the mall parking lot and they wouldn't let anybody out of there because they were doing an investigation of all the parts and stuff that were up there.

ALLISON: Right.

NYLAND: And so, I had to call Brenda and I walked down into Crystal City to Costco and she drove in from Bolling and picked me up and then we went home. It was truly unbelievable. It was one of those, I'll never have trouble remembering where were you when.

ALLISON: Well, kind of maybe before 9/11, going back again, talking about taking over the Department of Aviation, did the Commandant have any marching orders for you in that regard that he wanted--a direction that he wanted Aviation to go, any priorities that--?

NYLAND: I don't remember getting any specific guidance. I think the two that you always get are: continue to march; and don't screw it up. That was probably two that were relayed to me, once or twice, each of them.

I think because the Commandant was very comfortable with where Aviation was heading, Fred was kept imminently informed. And like I said, Fred and I were locked at the hip anyway because we just--we had that relationship, we both loved the Marine Corps, we loved aviation, and so we had that bond already. And so, from the Commandant's standpoint it was just a logical transition; nothing really was significant that he needed to point out to get on with. So I think, the course is set, the course is true, keep the march.

ALLISON: What about Vernon Clark, CNO, how was your relationship with him?

NYLAND: I had a very good relationship with CNO.

ALLISON: What was his background, he's a surface guy?

NYLAND: He's a surface guy. His D[deputy]CNOs were, [Robert F.] "Rat" Willard was second, and first was [William J.] "Fox" Fallon, and I'd known both of them. Fox was an A-6 guy, and Rat was a Hornet guy. So, we had good dialogue. And I would say one of the things, I think we always had really good dialogue at the service chief, vice chief, and even most of the three star level. But, where you get difficulty sometimes is when guys, in the

Marine Corps we refer to them as the iron majors, and these are the guys that are going to go to the mat for what they think, and we have to help them see the bigger picture.

Under Jones, we had meetings with the leadership of the Navy and the Marine Corps, where we would come together in war fighter talks and talk about our issues, and how do we get around this hurdle here, and this one is important to us. So I think there was always an effort. I mean, there's always going to be some tension inside the Beltway. There's some tension outside the Beltway, but; everybody gets the job done, and they do a great job. But in here, it's resources, in the end it's resources. And, so--you just--you have to be smart, you have to have your facts, you have to know what's required, and what's going on; and that's the best you can do to go into the discussion, whether it's on the Hill, or whether it's in the department, or whether it's at OSD, or whether it's at the joint staff, to be able to present your case.

ALLISON: Okay. Well, now the war is beginning to spool up, talking about going to war. I'm sure. Do you become involved in those discussions, like they're playing Task Force 58?

NYLAND: Not much in Task Force 58 because [James] "Jim" Mattis did a magnificent job with that. He basically took two MEUs and merged them, so those assets were out that. Now as time would come and there would be a requirement for additional assets, we would have some visibility open up. But of course, the joint staff, would go to the operational commanders for those assets. We would stayed engaged because we'd know where other airplanes would be, and then maybe that wouldn't end up out of SDLM [special depot level maintenance], and NADep [Naval Aviation depot maintenance] or whatever. So, particularly Task Force 58, not that much.

Well, that changed after we crossed the line in April of 2003 because all the services--then everybody became involved because we're trying to figure out the rotation, as the number of assets just continued to grow, and grow, and grow, and grow. And then to sustain them, it was yeoman's work by everybody to figure out how we would do that rotation and build the--we used to have these charts, I think we called them badge charts or something. But basically, it was who's coming when, how's this mosaic look, who's going to provide this kind of capability, who's got this one, what are the ground units? So, it was--but for Task Force 58, I don't remember that having a particularly significant event in aviation.

ALLISON: Late March [2003]. So, that really changed things, and that's where you had to start doing the--and I guess that was a big issue because it seemed like the Marine Corps, with the seven-month rotation as opposed to the Army and the other services, I'm not sure.

NYLAND: That was one that Mr. Rumsfeld wanted to understand, and we spent a lot of time on that one just like we did on MarSOC. That was when--you heard the term snowflakes, well was several pages of snowflakes that dealt with those issues.

ALLISON: Snowflakes is referring to Don Rumsfeld's--

NYLAND: Rumsfeld's notes, I want to know about this, come see me about this. So, but yeah, that was--that seven-month was an issue, and so was the MarSOC, both of which ended up, more than one snowflake each.

ALLISON: But that was later on.

NYLAND: But that was after I was up there in the ACMC office.

ALLISON: Okay, sir. Well, we'll talk about that more, maybe. But, a big issue that came up when you were in aviation, was TAI, tactical aviation integration. It sounded like you had a lot of the graybeards coming out saying you shouldn't do it, this and that, Guadalcanal, and all that stuff.

NYLAND: There never was a shortage of opinions. They were lined up all across the board too. I mean, they were, if you ever do this, to boy, this makes a lot of sense, we need to do this. I mean, General Dailey even published an article about it. And General [Philip D.] Shutler had his belief of what role carrier aviation played. So, the real intent was, quite honestly, to align the Navy and the Marine Corps a little closer, and to put some rigor behind when we would be on the CV, when we wouldn't be on the CV, and why would that be sustainable; and it had to do with a shortage of fighter attack aircraft, roughly, five squadrons worth that the Navy felt that they needed. And so, it was a lot of hard work. I tell you what, a couple of the guys that did incredible work for us right then were [James F.] "Jim" Amos as a one star, and [Robert] "Bob" Walsh, and [Kevin J.] "Baja" Killea who just got selected for one star.

ALLISON: Did he really?

NYLAND: Yes. Yeoman's work, first to shape it, and then to sit down and start negotiating it. We worked with an outfit, Whitney Bradley and Brown, and they helped us put it

together. It was—[Michael] "Mike" Hough, did a lot of that work for me, he was my deputy for a while.

ALLISON: Your deputy as Department of Aviation?

NYLAND: Right. First "Tamer" [James Amos], and then "Hog" [Mike Hough]. So they kind of had, the day-to-day meetings and then we'd get together--I'd get together with either around seven or eight, or both and then we'd meet with the Secretary, and the CNO, and ACMC, and everybody. But, it was very controversial. It's continued to be refined, which I think is absolutely appropriate; it should be a living document, it should be based on what's happening now, not just based on what a hope would be that's probably got a shelf life. And, in the end, I think we are committed to, the last I read, at about five squadrons.

ALLISON: Well, that's almost kind of what it's always been anyway.

NYLAND: Well it has been on and off. Although we went thru a period of time where we didn't put any on there for quite a few years.

I mean, before that we'd always had a couple anyway and we used to exchange RIOs [radar intercept officers] and pilots in the F-4 days. But to me, this is kind of back to this thing about forward deployed naval forces being the best buy for America. So it makes sense to me, because what if after that first 30 days you've got to transition it ashore, which we have done? Well, the Navy AIMD [aircraft intermediate maintenance department] is not going ashore, it's not portable. Ours is. So why wouldn't we want to come off that deck and come ashore, be married with our MEUs and be able to sustain that and, then either a Navy squadron, the one that came off, or another Marine squadron comes and replaces the one that came off?

I mean, it's an incredible vehicle for the nation to be able to project force. And to me, I mean, we need to be a part of that. I mean, that's part of what we do. I mean, we get our wings in the naval aviation training command, we all go to the boat; so it's just a matter of finding the right balance at the right time, to me, it's not that hard of a concept. And I think we've proven that, although there was a lot of acrimony when it first came out, and there was some discussion that it could be up to ten squadrons or whatever, but it's just like all these exits dates; dates are a bad thing in my mind. What you need is, what are the circumstances? What's the situation? What are the facts on the ground, and what are the facts at sea? We can adjust. I mean, we train to do that, so we should do it.

ALLISON: So it really never was a really firm commitment that absolutely you will lose ten squadrons--

NYLAND: Oh yes, it was a firm commitment, and it was higher than five the first time out of the barrel. But then of course, what happens? OSD changes the buy rate on F-35, maybe gets a lower monthly year procurement on the [F/A-18] Es and F, I mean, so everything changes, that's why it needs to be capability/situational based. To me, what are the facts? What do we need to get done, and does it make sense? And then we can go after these things. And so, is it smart to have it locked in a number? I say no. I say how about tell me that you need to be able to maintain that kind of a capability, but we think the average number is going to be "X".

ALLISON: Depending on the circumstances.

NYLAND: Yes, circumstances and conditions again. And so I think that's what we've ended up with, pretty close to five, I think, that are normally integrated. And you can look at the long-range plans and see where they pop up in that, where they chop, where they start training and so forth. But I think, in truth, one of the greatest things that we have as Marines and naval expeditionary forces is flexibility. We ought to apply that to our thinking sometimes, too.

ALLISON: Right. Were you thinking that if we got a forward squadron on a CV, that they would forward deployed land base if--

NYLAND: Well, we were thinking two things; number one, they'd be available day one when the ground forces went in and that they would be people that they had trained with, they were close air support experts. And then the thinking was if it had to be done that way, there was no reason they couldn't transition ashore, and their MALS [Marine aviation logistics squadrons] or their RESPs [remote expeditionary strike package] like we created in 2d MAW for the Hornets in Taszar [Hungary] couldn't join them.

ALLISON: I see. Was that part of it then?

NYLAND: Yes. I mean but nobody could get past the number, the fact that you're committing ten squadrons I think it was.

ALLISON: Yep.

NYLAND: Well, okay. But, how about we look past that? And how about if it's not ten, how about if it's really turns out to only be five? There was a lot of talk acrimony about it,

but I think it was all built around how much, and then what will be available to the MAGTF? And my point would be is, they might be available sooner to the MAGTF if they're deployed aboard the CV, than if I have to wait to TransPac [trans-Pacific flight] them in and join folks already on the ground.

ALLISON: Right. And that happens rarely, though, I mean, a squadron comes off a CV and--.

NYLAND: I know it does. But, on the other hand we brought a Navy squadron off the CV and brought them ashore in Al Asad and proved the concept.

ALLISON: Right, [VMFA-] 251.

NYLAND: And we took care of the MALs, and the support, and everything. I mean, we can do these things; we just kind have to open up our eyes and think about what's possible in this world of supporting the MAGTF. And there's a lot of things on first brush that don't maybe leap out at you, but I think if you take your time and think your way through them you can think, whew, there's some plusses to this that I didn't think about the first time because I got wrapped up in the fact that I'm committing ten squadrons.

ALLISON: How often did people really come out and say, "Remember Guadalcanal!"?

NYLAND: I think, there's all the standard thing, the Navy says you can't trust the Marines, the Marines say you can't trust the Navy, and I don't know that anybody dredged up Guadalcanal.

ALLISON: You never really heard somebody use that argument?

NYLAND: You see it in movies, and you see it in some historical documents that people have cited it, I think, but I don't think in this, it was just a matter of you're giving away more than half of the MAGTF assets, maybe. On the other hand, maybe I'm positioning some of those to where they'll be available more quickly to the MAGTF then if I had to wait and get tanker briefs set up, and get my MALS house moved. So, it was--to me, it was tough times, it was new, it was change. A lot of us are not real good at change. I mean, I know I'm slow, but it kind of takes me back to what's the best bang for the buck. I always wanted us to be so that we could just walk in there and there was no question at OSD that we, we're--okay, we're going to finally break the one-third, one-third, one-third for the departments; and then the Department of the Navy is getting 40 percent because this is what you all deliver, you are

lockstep, you are ready to do this, you've proven it to me, you've guys get 40 percent, the other two, they get 20 percent each, there's no thirty, thirty, thirty.

If you look at three departments, one-third, one-third, one-third. So--,

ALLISON: Is it still that way? Did they ever break it?

NYLAND: No. They bite around the edges. But, I mean, I tell you, plus or minus--in my experience, plus or minus five, it's always one-third, one-third, one-third.

ALLISON: Was part of it the idea that this would provide more resources for Marine Hornet squadrons by picking up this mission, that it would make a more--you could get more, maybe, parts or whatever, better equipment for the Hornets if you're--if they've got to go aboard ship because the Navy has the same planes?

NYLAND: Yes, there's always in the back of the mind that the frontline guys are going to get the latest mods, whether it's ECP 583, or whether it's Nighthawk FLIR [forward-looking infra-red] or whatever. But I don't think it was--while that was probably discussed at some level that--because you have to match them, now, you have to match Navy squadrons and Marine squadrons, the capabilities to what the AMD [aircraft maintenance department] can support on the ship. So, I mean, there were those discussions, but I don't think the discussion was focused on we'll get newer and better things necessarily.

ALLISON: But that could be a perk though?

NYLAND: It could be, it could be a fall out. Because if you got--you're flying a bunch of Lot 13 jets and they're next to go, and the Navy's got Lot 17 jets, these guys might get some upgrades sure. Because it has to be, as common as it can be, for the AMD on board the ship. But I don't think that was the driving factor.

I think the driving factor was the interchangeability of the squadrons; it was to address the five squadron shortfall that the Navy had; and it was just to get the DON [Department of the Navy] kind of aligned and headed the same way together with the two service chiefs and what we brought to the nation.

ALLISON: Did it bleed over into the issue of the Bravo model of the Joint Strike Fighter that the Marine Corps was wanting, as opposed to the C-model of the joint strike fighter? And also F-18, E and F, was the Marine Corps--were there efforts to get the Marines to take the E and F instead?

NYLAND: I don't think they were that strong while I was in Aviation. They've gotten certainly much stronger even since I've retired because they went in there as a little bit of a slip in the joint strike fighter [contract], and then Navy has had good success with the E and F, and they've got another multi-year procurement.

ALLISON: The Marine Corps has never attempted to do that?

NYLAND: No. I mean, you can't go back. This vision that's been handed down since I was a major about type, model, series numbers, and the ability then to take those JSF off the boats and put on the ground. Now, subsequently, the Marine Corps, I believe, has now agreed to buy five of the JSF squadrons will be Charlie models, and with the understanding that they'll be the boat squadrons. Is that gonna come to pass? I don't know. Who knows what's going to come to pass? I mean, how many carriers are there going to be after we get through sequestration? How many air wings will there be? How many squadrons will we have left? So, there was not so much when I was in Aviation because the Joint Strike Fighter was--we selected the airplane while I was in Aviation, I was on the panel that made the final down select.

ALLISON: What does that mean down select?

NYLAND: At that time, it was Boeing and Lockheed Martin. And then so, although the real decision-makers were SAEs, or service acquisition executives, we were provided the opportunity to sit on the panel and listen to the briefings and everything. So, that wasn't as much of an issue when I was in aviation. It started to become an issue while I was ACMC because we were wedded to the B model, and there were discussions about well, we don't think it's going to work on the carrier. And our comeback was why don't we wait until we have one and then check it out and see, instead of "Well, we want a long-range plan and so"--every year we write into the long-range plan. I mean we call them long-range, we call PRs, we call them program reviews, we do it every year. We throw the cards up in air, we start again, because it's things just like sequestration. So, our point was always, hey, we're going to be there, we're going to be there with you, but we're not going to throw the B model over the side until we have one that we can put it out there and check it out. Now, since then there's other accommodations that have been made, and I don't know them, I'm privy to all the dialogue and discussions, that's fine. But even that, in my mind, it's got to be a living

document. I don't know how many F-35's of any nature we're going to end up buying with the way sequestration is going.

ALLISON: Talk about a low hanging fruit.

NYLAND: I think that's the other thing, it's easy to get spun up and emotional on Tuesday, but sometimes it's not bad to go home and have a glass of red wine and think about Tuesday in seven years. I don't want to get so spun out of control right now and do something stupid, I certainly don't want to destroy any bridges, and I don't want to commit to something that I can't foresee for sure will be the same at its end stage. So, plan an accommodation ---

ALLISON: Don't get locked in some lane that you might regret later on.

NYLAND: Yeah. I mean, it was a lot of concern about how the JSF would do. When it first went out there, it went out to the amphib; it did great. One of the gains out of that was a new nonskid deck that is far superior to what they had before. So, okay, now we got, in my mind, two wins.

ALLISON: You're talking about nonskid decks that will take the heat from the--.

NYLAND: Right, yes.

ALLISON: Did they ever bring up the experience of the Harrier squadron that went out on the whole [USS] Roosevelt back in 1980s, sometime?

NYLAND: It doesn't get much play, although, it's one that the Marines often bring up because they were on there and they did fine. And actually, coming home from the Gulf War, Admiral Riley Mixson brought a bunch of Harriers home on his carrier.

ALLISON: Oh really. Flying it off of there and everything?

NYLAND: Yes. But, so I think the Roosevelt thing was a pretty successful deployment--,

ALLISON: They say it was.

NYLAND: It just kind of gives credence to why should we write off this capability off the CV without having even tried; there's always this fear the Navy has that it will interrupt or disrupt the deck cycles. Well, maybe they need to be interrupted, or maybe they can--because of their ability to come in so quickly, maybe they come in between cycles, they don't even have to have a cycle if you will. I mean, there's tactics, techniques, procedures, we're always trying to do better with what we have; and I think my point is just not make a decision we can't turn back from when there's that much at stake for capability, for the services, and for the future. Let's put it to a real test, not a paper test, not a test by CNA

[Center for Naval Analysis], I'm talking about putting lieutenant commanders and majors, and Sailors and Marines out there maintaining them and see what the hell happens. Does it work? Does it not work? Why? Is that an 'overcomable'? Is it, we can't do it? I mean, let's base it on the facts, not emotion.

ALLISON: Or tradition.

NYLAND: Or tradition. Of course, we are known for our tradition of paranoia, so everything is we've got to watch it.

ALLISON: Yes, that's right. All the services have their culture. Okay, so anything else on TAI?

NYLAND: No, that was just very controversial, but I would tell you that people that worked on it, and the people that continue to work on it have done a marvelous job. And in my mind, as long as it stays a livable, living, viable document, and we do it based on what are the needs of the services at this point, and the services needs and the answer to the nation, we'll be fine, we'll be fine. It's when we stop talking. It's back to the same issue of why is acquisition broken; because we don't talk enough.

ALLISON: Yes. Okay sir. Now, there, as far as other the aircraft programs we've already talked about, they're moving along, they're continuing. Do you remember any particular challenges that you faced?

NYLAND: The big one again, back to the heavy lift, was finding the money for that--,

ALLISON: The [CH-] 53K.

NYLAND: -- we had taken some money out of that at one point when we were still looking at gun options for the V-22. So, we didn't really get the 53K funded properly until towards the end of my time as ACMC, and the airplane was needed now.

ALLISON: Sure.

NYLAND: So that's probably the one, that if I had one to pick out that I wish we could have somehow done better, it would be with the 53K. But the others have continued to march along. Sure we'd like to have bought in larger quantities, and so would industry had rather we bought them in larger qualities, but that's the fact of life. And so, we continue to bring great value to the DON and to the nation with the capabilities that we have. Just proud to have been part of it.

ALLISON: The 53 was really important for Afghanistan. I think everybody just really opened their eyes--,

NYLAND: Hugely important.

ALLISON: --and what they were doing. Afghanistan operations were ongoing during this time, Task Force 58 was over--.

NYLAND: Well, think about how far they went from sea to inland--,

ALLISON: Right.

NYLAND: --about 500 miles.

ALLISON: Yes.

NYLAND: You're not going to be doing that with anything other than the 53? In flight refueling, lots of power for high altitude operations, a great capability.

ALLISON: Now the Osprey at this time, I think, had--was being reworked and--during this time and had VMX [Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron] 22 stood up at this time, or were you still doing--still working with the VMMT [Marine Medium Tiltrotor Training Squadron]-204 that was really not doing anything?

NYLAND: I don't think VMX stood up while I was in Aviation. It might've been right on the end of it, but I'm trying to think when that was.

ALLISON: I believe, 2003, late 2002.

NYLAND: Yes, I don't remember 100 percent. It may have stood up just as I was moving out the door, but--

ALLISON: With Colonel Walters?

NYLAND: Yes, there's a guy that now he's nominated to be P & R, and what a wonderful individual. He's done more than any one single individual to keep that V-22 program right, and he's done a magnificent job as 2d MAW commander, and in combat. But, yes, he did a great job for us, and yes, that's a great airplane. But on that, I'd have to look on a calendar to know exactly when the VMX stood up, they all kind of run together.

ALLISON: Right. Were you involved in the decision-making of getting that stood up instead of just going back into VMMT-204?

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: What were the considerations there?

NYLAND: Well, I think it was the--because it was such a new airplane and we were the only holders, I mean it was a way to almost like, a VX-4, or VX-5, is to put inside that same kind of a framework, and then be able to provide the kind of oversight and scrutiny that we wanted to have to make sure that we didn't miss anything, and then bring the thing into full preproduction. And so, it lent itself to that kind of a construct, I think.

ALLISON: Okay. Well, the safety record was--the aviation safety record was going the wrong way, it looks like, and these years. I found--

NYLAND: Well, it bounced, as I recall.

ALLISON: Okay.

NYLAND: We'd have a good year, we'd have a bad year, we'd have a good year, we'd have a bad year.

ALLISON: Yes, and 2003 was 2.91, whereas 2002 was 3.89, and then 2004 jumped up, really up, 5.18--,

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: --and people were saying, well, they were all peacetime accidents.

NYLAND: I think some of them were in combat too. But I would submit, probably, that a lot of the peacetime ones, particularly in that latter period 2004 were guys trying to get trained. And while, even one is too many. There is some cost to doing this business.

ALLISON: Realistic training.

NYLAND: I mean, realistic training, and doing it right. And some of those mishaps are parts that failed, and some of them are aircrew that failed. And I think we went through a period where we tried to introduce this crew risk management and looked at a lot of things, which some help, some don't. But they're--in the end, to me, it's all about just being professional with what we're given as assets, whether it's other people, whether it's mechanical, or whatever. And if you approach it professionally from a standpoint of, right from planning all the way through execution, to debriefing it, you'll get the kind of operating record that you want to have. And does focus need to be placed on safety? You bet. But it also doesn't work well as a baton that thumps people all the time. I mean, you got to count on people wanting to be known as a professional; and if they're in this business, then I would hope that that's where they want to be, and if they aren't, you can help them to the door.

But if we're going to operate these things, then we have to expect people to operate them within the envelopes, to know what the envelopes are, and why the envelopes were designed, and that's part of being a professional. You can't risk and analyze everything because there's always going to be something that's going to come up that you didn't think, and that's when you revert back to your basics and doing the right thing, just like you do the right thing when nobody is looking.

So, we've made great strides. We've put a lot of focus on it. I mean as ACMC, I was the safety officer for the Marine Corps. I had a colonel that ran the Safety Division. I think it's as much, culture is not the right word, but it's as much a way of how you operate and you have to go beyond that. It can be a buzzword, it has to be part of doing your--you do whatever you do properly, thoroughly, from preparation through execution, and then look at how you did, if you're going to get there. If you take one of those steps out, you're not going to get there and you run the risk of losing yourself, losing an asset, or losing others. I think it's kind of like a mental state.

I mean, people need to understand that--I mean, that was my philosophy at 2d MAW and we had a pretty darn good record there. I think we had two mishaps and they were both mechanical. I think you have to put the onus back on the people that are driving the airplanes, or driving a tank, or driving the HMMWV [high mobility multi-wheeled vehicle] and say these are my expectations, so there's no questions, and we can talk about them at any time, and now you go execute. And sometimes we think that all too often some contractor or some system, or some set of tools is going to take that away, but in the end everything that we do, to include the highest technology, is about people; and so you got to get that person interested in what they're doing, and you got to get make him understand that his actions or her actions can impact not only him or her, but fellow Marines, fellow sailors, and expensive equipment. And I think when you get people thinking in that way, all this other stuff sort of comes--gets off on that curve and gets out of the way, that's my theory.

ALLISON: Sounds good. Ever since I've known you, you've been involved as a safety officer.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: I remember you ran safety--the safety program in [VMFA-] 212 back there, so I know safety has always been on your skyline.

NYLAND: Well, I've been in and out of it, but I was an operator long before I was in safety. I mean, I was OpsO [Operations Officer] of two fighter squadrons as a captain. My favorite word is professionalism. And then I have behind each of those letters I arrange it vertically, and behind each one of those letters I have anywhere from three to five other words that begin with that letter.

ALLISON: Sort of what--under professionalism?

NYLAND: Of professionalism. And when I took over 2d MAW, I sat down with every CO [commanding officer], every XO [executive officer], and every sergeant major, it takes me about two hours to go through that thing. But by the end when everything is over, you know what matters to me, what doesn't matter to me, what my expectations for you are, what your responsibilities are, how much accountability you have, and I'm telling you, I'm a believer. Maybe I was just naïve and lucky and it worked, but to me, when you communicate with your people right from the get-go and you give them that kind of a box, well who designs the size of the box? You do as the commander, and they understand it, they're going to figure this out. And if they don't figure it out, then you help them out the door.

ALLISON: I know we had a great safety record in 212. We got the CNO safety award.

NYLAND: It's a hugely important thing, but I worry that we try to solve it with gimmicks, fads, whatever, as opposed to just instilling the proper attitude and mental awareness in our people sometimes, and it takes time because you have to talk to them; but that's more important than sitting in your office in front of your blue, face-sucking machine. You ought to be out talking to your people.

ALLISON: Sir, it sounds good. You ready to break for lunch?

NYLAND: Sure.

ALLISON: Let's do it.

END OF SESSION VII

PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee:	General William L. "Spider" Nyland, USMC
Date:	18 June 2013
Location:	Pensacola, Florida
Interviewer:	Dr. Fred Allison (Historian, USMC History Division) and Steve Heffernan (Oral Historian-Naval Aviation Museum)

SESSION VIII

ALLISON: Okay, this is a continuation of the interview with Spider **NYLAND** on the 18th of June, in the afternoon. And we were--just had finished up talking about safety in the Marine Corps and in particular, Marine aviation. And I wanted to throw out another question related to safety. And you've probably had this thrown at you many times. Why does the Marine Corps consistently – it seems, to have a higher accident rate and mishap rate than any other service? Do you have any philosophy behind that or observations?

NYLAND: Well, first off, of course, we don't generate as many flight hours as everybody else. So, every other service has some kind of airplane that is long-legged and generates a lot of flight hours. So, your mishap rate is determined based on number of incidences per 100,000 flight hours. So, we begin at a disadvantage from that standpoint because all our airplanes are tactical and they're all essentially, relatively short-legged, short sorties. So we don't have a fleet of KC-10s or B-52s, nor do we get credit for the hours that are flown by Marines in the training command. And so, we have had a disadvantage not having any kind of a long-hauler or trainer that generates extra hours that would mitigate the numbers a little bit.

The other thing is, I think, we try very, very hard to train realistically. And I think we have come into the world of simulators, which a lot of people believe are the be-all to end-all. I personally think the simulator's only a place is to make sure you don't waste time or do something dumb in the airplane when you get the opportunity. But because we believe that if you're going to be a low altitude tactics instructor you've got to fly at low altitude, and get

qualified, and then do it to maintain your currency, that kind of realistic training, I think, is one part of why ours might be higher.

The other thing that's interesting is the bulk--and I haven't run the numbers in a long time, but there's reason to believe, in my mind, that at least 50 percent, and perhaps higher, happen during the admin phase of the flight; on the way there, on the way home. And I think that has to do with some sort of a let your guard down a little bit after: I've done the very demanding portion of the sortie – down there, rooting around at a 100 feet; now I'm back up to 10,000 feet and I'm going home and I'm just kind of along for the ride instead of minding the ride. So, I think all of those together sort of are--that's how I believe our rate gets to be pinpointed as a little bit higher generally than others. But--a combination of those factors in my mind.

ALLISON: I believe during this time when you were running aviation, Marine Aviation, there was a big push on to get additional survivability equipment on aircraft going into the theater. Was that a challenge to get that done in the short run and on short notice?

NYLAND: In the end, we got it done, and people paid attention and we got it done. We went through the same thing when we put the Hornets into Hungary. The bottom line through this, that while that is--the ASE [air survivability equipment] is absolutely essential, it doesn't stand up well in budget scrubs. We don't have anybody in war, why do you have to have that ASPJ? Or, why do you have to have that jammer? Why do you have to have that RWR [radar warning receiving] gear? And so, oftentimes, one of the areas that we see loses money in peacetime is in aviation support, survivability equipment, and by the way, spare parts and engineering support too.

But because those lines are sort of kept on nurture/feeding, where you have often been able, fortunately, to be able to reach back in there quickly when the need would arise and get our--get the equipment that we needed and get them on the airplanes pretty quickly, that's not a very good way to do business, in my mind. Another area that we see all the time, it gets cut in the budgets scrubbing, the money that takes engineering and looks at things before they break to find out what's going to fail next, what's the weak point in this engine, what's the weak part in this generator. That doesn't do well in the budget because there's not a problem yet. And yet, we spend billions when something goes bad because we didn't have one-tenth of that investment up front. But, when there's not a lot of money, you have trouble

selling things that aren't necessary today to get the airplane airborne. So, we, I think, have been--and kudos to NavAir [U.S. Navy Naval Air Systems Command] and the industry for being able to do so and get us our equipments on short notice, often when we need it to go. But, it's not without angst and it's not without pain. And it's primarily because I don't think we do a really great job of leaving the money in there when the budgets are put together. And somewhere between getting to OSD [Office of Secretary of Defense], and to OMB [Office of Management and Budget], and to the [Capitol- or Congress] Hill, they all find what they consider to be better purposes for the money.

ALLISON: Never have funding.

NYLAND: Never enough. I would always tell people, we could build the perfect budget, all four services could be in lock-step and we could have the perfect budget, it still has to survive OSD, OMB and the Hill.

ALLISON: Tough business.

NYLAND: [Laughing] so, back to your point about getting elected. It might have a little bit to do with some difficulties there.

HEFFERNAN: Yes, you need to run for office. No question.

NYLAND: [Laughing]

HEFFERNAN: It would be nice to have some common sense up there.

NYLAND: [Laughing] Yes, there oftentimes seems to be a shortage, doesn't there?

ALLISON: Just don't drink the water when you go - there's something in the water there.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: That completes the questions I had prepared for your tour as Deputy CMC, Aviation. Do you have any other comments on your tour as leader of Marine aviation?

NYLAND: Well, I mean other than I was very privileged and very fortunate. I worked with a lot of really great people, and I think we managed to keep the Marine aviation vision alive and relatively healthy and continued to advance it, which I would guess the proof is in what we're fielding today. So all of us that passed that along had the opportunity to shepherd it a little bit, I'm pretty proud of where we are.

ALLISON: The transformation.

NYLAND: What little bit or role I might have had in that.

ALLISON: I'm sure you had quite a bit. Well, in September [2001], around that timeframe, maybe before you heard that you were going to be promoted to four stars and be ACMC [Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps]. So, what's going through your mind when you hear that?

NYLAND: It was pretty amazing. First, I was in [General James L.] "Jim" Jones' office one day, I went down there for something, I guess, and he said, "Sit down." And I said, "Yes, sir." And he's sitting on the edge of the table; I'm sitting over there and he said that--and we still talk about this. I thought he said, "I'm thinking about making you ACMC." He told me later he said, "I told you I'm making you ACMC." [Laughing] Because he had to remind me one other time, that was part of the linkage, ultimately, of getting me over in the Barracks and then moving over there because I would have to move from Quarters Four now to Quarters One. So, in addition to eight moves inside the Pentagon and the old Headquarters, I made three moves in housing while I was there for that little over five years.

But anyway, he--I said, "Sir, what are you saying to me?" I mean I didn't know what to say. Obviously, I knew that I was one of the candidates, and there were one or two others, and he said, "Well," he said, "You're the right guy for the job." And he said, "So, you're going to be the ACMC." I said, "I'm on it, I'm ready to go." It was interesting. [General Michael J.] "Mike" Williams, who had the job before me, told me the same thing; he'd been P & R for three years, so he had a lot of time in the building. And before that, he'd been the Director of the Marine Corps Staff. He said, "You know, I felt like I had a pretty good handle on everything that went on in the Marine Corps," he said, "until I went down to the ACMC office and found out I didn't." And I said, "Well"--because he told me that and I thought, "Well, I've got Aviation, I've got P&R," it sounded pretty good and, sure enough, there's a lot that goes on that you don't see when you've got those lane separators wrapped around your brain housing mode.

There's just an awful lot going on, and then the level of the meetings and the things that you have to attend, the things you need to represent the Commandant, it was an eye-opener and exciting as hell. But, you will always think you're fairly well groomed for where you're going. But probably that one, I was surprised to see how much else I hadn't really--I might have touched it sort of sideways but never head-on. It was a big plate.

But, he was--he was terrific. He said, "You're the man." I said, "Okay, sir."

ALLISON: Did you go through a confirmation?

NYLAND: No, I did not have to.

ALLISON: If the Commandant says he wants you then that's--

NYLAND: Well, no. In fact, under Secretary [of Defense] [Donald H.] Rumsfeld, most times you had to go for an interview for a three or four star position. And then--and oftentimes, particularly for the four stars, you had to go to the Hill for a hearing. But, I guess because I'd been there so long, the Hill had seen me as a three-star with the money, a three-star with Aviation, and General Pete Pace was the Chairman, he knew me and I'd been sitting in on JROCs [Joint Requirements Oversight Council] and MROCs [Marine Requirements Oversight Council] and stuff for the Commandant, and I'd seen Rumsfeld far more than once, particularly in the money days; less so in the Aviation days; and they signed off on it, sent it over to the Hill, and bingo. So, I had no specific interviews for ACMC. And I think probably just because I was such a known quantity. I'd already been up there two-plus years on that tour.

ALLISON: Okay. That's interesting. Was there any kind of ceremony as far as change of command or anything? Did you have a ceremony for pinning on the four-star?

NYLAND: Oh, yes, actually, I did. I mean, it was--Jim Jones made it very, very special. My parents flew in. It was one of the last flights that they took because they were just too old to handle it.

ALLISON: Where were they living at the time?

NYLAND: They were in California-Sacramento.

But it was a wonderful ceremony done at the Barracks with the Marines out there set up like a Friday night parade, and I came forward and he--gracious remarks about what I brought to the table and everything, and then I had my dad and my son pin on my stars. And then I had a pass and review, and then a reception in the garden, and then it was get to work. But, it was really spectacular and for me, I just--I love all that, the tradition and the ceremony, and everything in the Marine Corps anyway; and to be part of it for that specific purpose was really cool and made a big moment in my life for sure. I told you about when I got promoted to one-star, right?

ALLISON: Nope. At least I've forgot it.

NYLAND: Well, so, I came in through the Navy ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] and the guy who really influenced me was then Major Robert E. Haebel, later Major General Robert E. Haebel.

ALLISON: Okay, yeah. And he was running the ROTC--

NYLAND: He was the Marine officer instructor at the University of New Mexico. And so, I'd come from a long line of Navy; both grandfathers were Navy captains, my dad was a Navy commander, two uncles were Navy pilots. And so I go off to the University of New Mexico and as soon as I get there, the XO of the unit says, "I've talked to your dad, I know you're going to be a naval officer and da, da, da." And the very first time we're in formation, General Haebel, then Major Haebel, comes up and starts talking to me about, "You ought to be thinking about the Marine Corps."

So, I go off on summer cruise. I sail on the sister ship of the ship my dad commanded. He commanded USS Marshall (DD-676), I sail on the USS Porterfield (DD-682), and he is the N-3 at the Phib Group Three staff and I go over and spend a couple nights on the USS Mount Whitney with him and back to my ship, and he's no doubt thinking, "Okay, he's going to follow in my footsteps." But, I go to sea the first day and I'm thinking, "Okay, I understand that the international waters is at 12 miles, so either we'll go out about three miles and we'll make a 90 degree turn, we're going from San Diego to Seattle and we'll head to Seattle; or, we'll go to a little past 12, make a 90 degree turn." Well, instead we start with these ever increasing circles. And the sea gets worse and rougher and rougher, and I'm assigned in CIC [combat information center] my first ship out and I'm going, "I don't know if I should be wanting to do this all my life." So, anyway, long story short, I go back and I talk to Major Haebel and I said, "I think I want to join the Marines." And he said, "I want you to call your dad first." So, I called my dad and I'm kind of expecting that I'll get this blast about all the Navy and the Marines and everything. I said, "Well, dad, I got a taste but after we talked, after my cruise and everything, and I just--I think I'm going to be better off with a .45 in my hand saying, '**NYLAND**, take your platoon, take that hill.' And what do you think about that, yeoman?" And he says, "I think if it makes you happy, it makes me happy." Boom.

So, away I go. Then I make one-star. Major General Haebel pins on one side, my dad pins on one side. So, every one of them was very special for me. But, there was one

individual (Gen Haebel) that had an enormous impact on my life, and he came when I was promoted to four-star. Right there in the audience, sitting behind my folks.

ALLISON: He was an infantry general, I think.

NYLAND: Right, actually started in life as an amtracker. And then he was infantry, artillery.

ALLISON: So, you were thinking about being a ground officer at that point?

NYLAND: When I first went in the Marine Corps, I thought I was going to go into recon.

ALLISON: Oh, really?

NYLAND: Yes. Then I took those aviation tests that they gave me there at TBS and I thought about it a little bit; and then I think it was right after the night compass march when I'm taking a face full of twigs and everything and I thought, "Hmm, maybe I ought to look into that."

ALLISON: The forest is telling you something there.

NYLAND: Yes. So he had an incredible impact on my life; but, he was present for that day when I made four-stars, too, and all through my career, he was terrific. He came to the building while I was in Washington, D.C., I'd come back and there'd be a little note on my desk, "The Big Lobo was here, how are you doing?"

ALLISON: The Big Lobo?

NYLAND: Yes. And every time I made school, every time I made promotion, I'd get a note. Very, very special. But to have him there, too, when I made four-star was--

ALLISON: But I didn't realize, until I was just looking at something the other day that [Lieutenant General Bruce B.] "Barry" Knutson was in your University of New Mexico class too.

NYLAND: Barry and I were classmates and so was Milo Warner, who retired as a colonel.

ALLISON: Right. F-18 pilot?

NYLAND: Milo was an F-4 guy, RIO [radar intercept officer].

ALLISON: Oh, okay.

NYLAND: But it was a wonderful ceremony; a reception there in the Commandant's garden after the Marines marched by.

ALLISON: Of course, you were the first NFO [naval flight officer] to be a four-star--full general.

NYLAND: Yes, I was blessed. I was the first Marine NFO to be one, two, three, or four.

ALLISON: Was there ever a Navy NFO that had been four-star?

NYLAND: Yeah, [William] "Fox" Fallon. I think there was one other, but I'm not positive.

ALLISON: Okay. That's sort of controversial too.

NYLAND: I guess in some corners.

ALLISON: For me, as far as that goes, because there was always people that to the-- to go back to them, and you probably told me this, yourself that people thought that, first of all NFO shouldn't even be officers, and then they should be commanders, they should not command a squadron--.

NYLAND: Well, we came a long way over my time. A lot of guys grew up in single seat airplanes. When they got into the F-4, they just weren't ready to share cockpit duties, necessarily; it wasn't uncommon for somebody to say, "Just strap in and sit there and I'll take care of everything." Wait a minute. But we came from that all the way to being not only accepted, but command, and everything. And then I was just really fortunate to be the first one that broke into the brigadier general ranks and it was--now we have a couple. [Terry G.] "Guts" Robling, three-star PAC [Marine Forces Pacific], and then [Francis L.] "Frank" Kelley, who's the head of SysCom [Systems Command] as EA-6B ECMO [electronic countermeasures officer].

I never thought about it like that until one time in the--it was either--I can't remember if it was General [Charles C.] Krulak or General [John R.] Dailey, I think was General Dailey, introduced me somewhere as "He's the Marine's first brigadier general NFO, first major general NFO, first lieutenant general NFO, first general NFO." Like I said, I was very blessed, very fortunate.

ALLISON: Well, now, you become the Assistant Commandant, what are your--could you give us an overview of your duties?

NYLAND: A to double Z. I guess we used to characterize it oftentimes as sort of the day-to-day operations. You just kind of kept the Headquarters [U.S. Marine Corps] moving and everything. Every Commandant travels, and the rate at which they travel varies from anywhere to 50 percent to greater than 70 percent; as well they should, because they need to go out and the Marines need to see him and be able to talk him, and plus they get a lot of good information by doing that. So, you kind of--you're going to all the meetings, you're the

continuity. I did a lot of speaking and things while I was there; but generally, it would be flying out in the evening and do it, and fly back, or fly back the next day, and not very extended. I would take--once in a while, take a little leave or something, but you really were sort of the continuity there. And the wonderful thing that I had with both Jim Jones and [General Michael W.] "Mike" Hagee was there were no secrets. They didn't have a pet project or secret project that they were working on that I didn't know about, and I didn't have anything that I was trying to work within the building that they didn't know about. So, the trust and the loyalty were complete and it was--and it made the job incredibly much more both doable and rewarding. And I've heard tales of others that didn't necessarily enjoy that that close of a relationship, and I could see where that could be a real stumbling block. You could get yourself in a jam on the Hill, you could get yourself a jam at OSD. So, I was very fortunate in that regard.

I guess I would characterize myself as the inside guy and the mechanic because the money still--the ACMC ran the MROC, goes to the JROC, and is the primary, along with the Deputy Commandant for P & R [Programs and Resources], financial advisor to the Commandant. And the money stuff never stops, obviously, when he's on travel. You always got three budgets, one you're spending, one you're hoping they'll approve, and one your building, and sometimes there's even a fourth, if they want to have a budget drill and tell you to do another one based on this set of assumptions. So, I would say sort of the day-to-day guy, inside guy continuity.

ALLISON: Running the Headquarters Marine Corps.

NYLAND: Yes, just keep the staff focused and keep them moving. One of the things, years ago, we had a three star Chief of Staff, and somewhere in the, I don't know, late 1980's, maybe, somewhere in there, anyway, we did away with them and the ACMC took those duties on. And after I left, we put that three-star back in there, which I was a proponent of, and, in fact, [General James T,] "Jim" Conway who was the next Commandant asked me about it and I thought it was really a great idea, and we now have a three star back in there. But for a period of time there, for me, and for Mike Williams, and for maybe for one in front of him, we used the secretary of the general staff who was an incredibly talented and sharp colonel, but he can't go to certain meetings, and he can't go sit down with the three stars like the ACMC or one of the three stars can.

And what I had experienced was, because my last year we did a QDR [quadrennial defense review] and a BRAC [base realignment and closure] simultaneously, I almost couldn't have enough hours in the day if you would have added six more. When do I find time to meet with the three stars and make sure that all they're doing is headed where it needs to head, plus meet with the QDR staff, plus meet with the guys and gals working on the BRAC? So, I think the reinstallation of that three star has made a big difference at the Headquarters and is a very wise investment of a three star billet. So there was plenty on my plate when we didn't have that three star there to kind of take some of those meetings.

ALLISON: So you had the QDR going on, you had the BRAC going on, plus you got the day-to-day meetings with your staff, plus MROCs, and JROCs.

NYLAND: Yes, JROCs.

ALLISON: And you got to be smart on all those things. So, I can see you spent a lot of time studying for these issues.

NYLAND: Well, at home, I had an office that had everything I had in my other office in the Pentagon. I had a computer, and I had a Tandberg for VTCs [video teleconferences], I could do secure, I can do unclass--

ALLISON: Right there at home.

NYLAND: I made it a point to try to leave at a reasonable hour; because after I left, then the people closing up and everything still had an hour's worth of work. So I tried to, unless I was in a meeting, to leave at1800 and just take it home and do it there because that meant they still didn't get on the road until 1900; and it is no sense in doing that unless there is an absolute necessity like you got to turn out a piece of paper or document or something. So, having that full office at home--while, Brenda probably didn't share the same vision of it as I did, but it was pretty essential.

ALLISON: Jeanne Patrick was your--what was her job?

NYLAND: Jeanne is the ACMC's Secretary, but she's much more. I knew Jeanne when I was a major in aviation, we hired her as a GS-4. So I've known her since, what the heck was that, 1981.

ALLISON: So she was in the Department of Aviation all that time?

NYLAND: Yeah, she was in Aviation for a long time and then I think it was General [Richard] Hearney who brought her from aviation up to the ACMC's office and she's been at

the ACMC's office ever since then; and what a tremendous lady, tremendous lady. I mean, she knows that building, and how to move things around, and how to get information.

ALLISON: So you got to keep people like that happy.

NYLAND: Yes, she's a dynamite lady, she is a dynamite lady. And I talk to her all the time still. I don't know how many more ACMCs she'll do. Every time we get a new one, I sent her a note and I say, "So Jeanne, how many more can you break in?"

ALLISON: I heard she's going to retire.

NYLAND: I think she's getting ready to, yes. I think she told me this will be her last one. But she is a gem. She and her husband, Dennis, are just great folks, and they got a great family.

ALLISON: Did your job is ACMC change when General Hagee came in?

NYLAND: Really not so much. When he was sworn in and became the Commandant, I went in and I sat down and said, "You know, sir, I'm good to go, or staying at your service," and he said "you're not going anywhere." Well, I'm honored, and, okay, so how do you want to do this? And we had the same ground rules, no secrets. We talked all the time. He actually traveled a little a little bit more than General Jones did, so that put me on the Hill, or in other meetings a little more frequently. But it was the same kind of just a wonderful relationship, and the ability to speak for him in his absence and know what he was thinking, and just get things done, so it was great. Like I said, no doubt I lived a charmed life, still am.

ALLISON: And the war kicked off right at that time too.

NYLAND: Actually we--some of the planning kicked off while General Jones was still there. And General Hagee, of course, had come in from I MEF, so he was intimately familiar with the planning; and then, of course, late March early April, I don't remember exactly, we kicked off and that started--that started a pretty good sprint. Because as, initially, not so bad because, obviously, things looked really great in about August of 2003. I mean, everything was calm, and then we had about 17, sort of like governances, and each one had either an Army or Marine battalion with a battalion commander there sort of holding the things down and things were pretty good. And then some decisions were made in September in doing away with the [Iraqi] Army, and some other decisions that were made, and bingo, come September and October now we're moving folks back in instead of taking folks out. The

Marines didn't go back in immediately; I think the first really big force went back in in January.

So what had looked like, wow, this has been--this is really some kind of a great campaign, only lasted about a week, everybody throwing their arms down and things are ready to go, and then—all those loose army fellows with weapons came back to haunt us. So, I was over there I think August or September '03 and it was pretty neat to go around to talk to these battalion commanders and see how they had things organized, and they were referencing the Small Wars manual, that was written after Nicaragua.

ALLISON: Right.

NYLAND: But I'm talking to a battalion commander and he tells me about he employs these guys to clear the waterways, he's the banker, how he opens up the fuel stations so they can get fuel at these hours. I mean, he was like a little mayor, governor, everything, all these wonderful Army and Marine lieutenant colonels in these governances. But then it turned out—"not so fast." So then we started putting folks back in there. That's when we got into what I was talking about earlier, with these badge charts. Basically, unit designation. So how in the world are we going to do it and what are the requirements? And I think as everybody--as history will show, the requirements grew for a while before they stabilized, and then they stabilized separately at a pretty significant level where--it's kind of go on, stay on, and most folks were--for as long as you were there, that's about as long as you got to be home, and you came back again.

ALLISON: One to one.

NYLAND: One-to-one ratio. So for us, that was seven months, and for the Army it was 13 or 12, depending. It was a huge amount of work done by the joint staff and service staffs to man, train, and equip to that level of engagement.

ALLISON: It got intense.

NYLAND: Well with this "surge" and Fallujah, Al Anbar, so it was--that really put a lot on the plate every day. If you add on everything else that's already going on, and then when you've got something that's got a high priority, when you got into looking at armoring vehicles, okay, what we do about that? So that's a new item on the menu today.

ALLISON: That became a big deal.

NYLAND: Very big. So it was quite a busy time, and it demanded a lot.

ALLISON: Did you find that the aviation resources we had were sufficient?

NYLAND: We used them all up. Particularly the rotary wing, we used all the active duty forces, we used all the reserve forces, we covered them all in rotation. We needed everything that we had, and oftentimes we could've used more; which as you've seen subsequently to that, in our most recent force structure, we've created a couple of more rotary wing squadrons and taking down a couple of fixed wing because that's what the--this Commandant and what the future looks like, the kind of engagement. You know you're going to need battlefield mobility more than you're going to need fighter CAPs [combat air patrols]. So we absolutely wore out Marine aviation. Some of the skid kids, the [UH-1N] "Hueys" and the [AH-1W] Cobras were actually doing less than one-to-one.

ALLISON: Oh really? If they had to do a MEU float or something like that, go to WestPac [Western Pacific]

NYLAND: So, it was a very, very busy time and a lot of great work done by everybody at Headquarters Marine Corps, and certainly the folks out in the operating forces, to give us both the knowledge and the ammunition to help them put together the plan that ultimately affected the entire Marine Corps, not just one coast or the other, a dynamic time.

ALLISON: And then during that timeframe, I think, Congress began to talk about increasing the number of Marines, right?

NYLAND: Well, we were allowed to let that end strength sort of float and it grew in a couple of stages, and I think the final stopping point was we grew to 202[000].

ALLISON: Yes.

NYLAND: As I recall we went into the thing, we went in at 172 [000] or 174[000]. But we grew to it much more quickly than anybody thought we would, and then stabilized it which really helped us to be able to work on that one-to-one [deploy to] dwell [ratio]. It's the Commandant's goal to get it at least to one to two. You I and enjoyed in the old days, we were really almost three to one.

You to go for six months, you'd be home a year and I'm not counting training for that time you're home. So, yeah, we--they allowed the in-strength to float. And then our final number was 202[000]. Of course now, we're coming back down to 182[000] and we'll see how that holds up with the sequestration.

ALLISON: Okay. MROC, do you remember any particularly memorable episodes in regard to MROC?

NYLAND: I probably got a book on it at home with all my notes.

ALLISON: The different hard decisions that had to be made.

NYLAND: I think we spent a lot of time on the armored vehicles. We had to work our way through the individual equipment. A lot of it, we were able to recoup money on it and they called it OCO [overseas contingency operations], in those days it was--they had a different term for it; but basically it was an add-on to the budget. I think between working the personal issues for the Marines' equipment and PPE-personal protective equipment, then probably the next biggest jump up was some ordnance and weaponry; but probably the biggest one working that armored vehicle thing.

ALLISON: That was always in the public eye.

NYLAND: Always in the public eye. We did some incredible work, Bill Catto, when he was the CG [commanding general Systems Command] down there working with [Marine Corps Logistics Base] Albany to build these kits for our vehicles.

ALLISON: Armored kits.

NYLAND: Armored kits. Incredible work by the folks at Albany building them and then moving them, and his play and understanding of the types of metals, and armor, and plasma cutting was just phenomenal; but always working towards what can we do for that young Marine that's out there in the field.

The tragic thing was, these guys with no finesse whatsoever, the bad guys, one, they get a vote, and two they just keep making the bombs bigger. We had the occasions where even tanks were flipped, that's pretty serious armor and a lot of weight.

ALLISON: Not a little bomb.

NYLAND: Yes, notable bombs. And that whole--the first time I went to Iraq and drove around, it looked like some giant old ASP - ammo storage points, everywhere. They buried airplanes, they buried whole airplanes, and the ammo was everywhere, and the bad guys knew where it was because they'd been released from the army and now they're running around with AK-47s and they can take you where all the 500 pounders are, where the duds are. It was amazing. But that armor thing was really a biggie.

Comm [Communicatioins] was a biggie, and making sure small things, even in getting them the right kind of sight--night sight, laser sight, anything that we could do, to enhance their ability to operate over there. Body armor; went through an awful lot of testing on body armor. How do we get it lighter? I mean, these kids are humping over there in 126 degree weather with a 100 pounds worth of gear on their back. Unbelievable! We just--a day didn't go by that someone wasn't trying to focus on how do we make this better? And then usually when it was an urgent need or an un-urgent needs statement, or a JUNS, joint urgent needs statement. Then we could--in many cases, we'd be able to get money for it from OSD or reprogramming, was sent to the Hill for action.

But it was like go on, stay on, and that's what it was for all the people because we knew that we had to get it, and get it done. There's other Marines out there dying, fighting for us. We're sitting back here, nobody likes Washington traffic, but guess what, how do you like downtown Anbar or Ramadi with everybody shooting at you and you don't have the right equipment? So we were pretty focused.

ALLISON: Did you get to do any traveling at all? I remember one trip you made in 2004 you went to Iraq?

NYLAND: Yes, it used to be two trips a year--two big trips a year, one in the Pacific, and one to Iraq and Afghanistan. And then, occasionally smaller trips. But back to being sort of the inside guy, I would time it to a period when the Commandant was going to be down on travel, and then I would look through, like I'd went to Djibouti, then to Kuwait, and then into Iraq; and then another time I hit Iraq and then over to Afghanistan, and then it's always one trip to the Pacific to visit the Marines out there and see what they were doing. So, usually, two big trips a year, meaning, a week, maybe a couple of days longer than that. And then some little--most of the short ones were really to go give a speech and then get on a plane and come home, because, like, somebody's gotta be there when that phone rings in the Pentagon.

ALLISON: Did you get to do doing any fly at all? Were you flying at all?

NYLAND: All the way through, from Deputy Commandant for Aviation, I had a waiver and was still flying. When I was Aviation, I was current in the Hornet. I was checked out to fly copilot in the C-12, so if I was going somewhere, I could get in the right seat and even flying with passengers in there. And then the guys at HMX [-1] were great because if I needed to

go somewhere close, they'd always bring up a Phrog [CH-46] and then they'd let me hop in the right seat and fly the Phrog.

ALLISON: That's the PIC [pilot in command] seat.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: So you got pretty proficient at flying helicopters. Did you do that when you were 2d Wing?

NYLAND: Yes. So I was really lucky. When I was CO [commanding officer] down here at MATSG [Marine Air Training Support Group 21], I went up to Whiting and they taught me to fly up there in the jet Ranger. Because my style at MATSG was, I didn't want to be an instructor in one type, model, series because that then would limit me to get around and see the Marines. So, I would go to Whiting one day to fly the T-34; I'd go to Whiting the next day to fly a rotary wing; I'd come down here and I'd fly in a TA-4, and then I'd fly in a T-39, and then I'd go up to Meridian and fly in the A-4 and a T-2, and then come back and do things, then start the cycle again. But, I wanted the Marines to know that I was here and I was very ready to help them, and be visible. One of the big pluses of that was learning how to fly the helicopters, which was pretty exciting.

Initially, I had a little trouble with always sort of trying to hover and I would end up moving forward. So they put me with one of the last flying warrant officers up at Whiting Field; he's a W-4 and he said, "We're going to fix that." And he takes the airplane and he goes and he taxis it right up and puts in a hover right at the tree line, and he says, "You got it, don't go forward."

ALLISON: That would stop that.

NYLAND: So, it was terrific. While I was never a pilot in command, I was safe and I really enjoyed flying. And as CG at 2d MAW, same thing, it was a way to find out--if you get to go to the ready room and brief with young people, go down on the hangar deck and read their aircraft data books, and then fly with them, and then talk to the Marines when you come back, that's the best away to know what's going on. You don't find that in your office.

And so the ability to go down there and be one of them again, to me, was the best of all worlds. And when I would see problems, I could go back and I could call one of the G-6s and say "I was down there, these two heads have been out of business for two days; what's going on? Get them some help," or whatever it might be, and it was great. So, then I was

able to continue to fly while I was at Headquarters. And I even flew as ACMC a couple times.

ALLISON: Did you?

NYLAND: My last hop in the Hornet was in Al Asad in June 2005.

ALLISON: Oh really?

NYLAND: Yes. So, pretty fortunate.

ALLISON: What squadron was that at the time?

NYLAND: The Bengals, [VMFA(AW)-] 224. [Wilburt E.] "Wheels" Thomas was the CO, and I'd known him for a long, long time, wonderful, wonderful guy. And so he was the squadron CO. So, I was scheduled to fly like the first or second day that I got there. Of all my trips there, I had never really seen up close a Shamal, a dust [storm], and I was scheduled to fly, and then land, and then helo out to Ramadi. Actually, I had [General Richard I.] "Butch" Neil come with me, because he was the head of MSTP [MAGTF Staff Training Program] at the time, and so, I said, "I'm going," And I said, "You want to go too?" And he said, "Yeah, I'd love to go." So he came along so he could be looking at what's current tactics and what people are doing. So, that Shamal comes in and my hop's canceled immediately. And then pretty soon, the helos can't go and so we--the long and short was, we ended up taking--we have to drive all the way over to Ramadi, which was a little bit interesting in and of itself. I had a great briefing by the corporal who's driving the thing about what to do and not do in the vehicle, I mean, he was terrific. But, so, I thought well, that's that. Here I am, my last chance to get a Hornet flight, and--

ALLISON: Kicked by weather.

NYLAND: And the morning I was going to leave, Wills comes through, he said, "You want to early launch?" "Of course, I'll take the early launch."

ALLISON: Down hops!

NYLAND: Yes, so a major and I go over there and I get the brief, and then we take off and they had the Litening pod, which was just dynamite. So, one last hop in the old Hornet, and then it landed; and my son-in-law was there with the [KC-] 130, so I got to see him and get the once over and got on the airplane and went home. So I was pretty fortunate as long as I got to fly.

ALLISON: Memorable.

NYLAND: Yes. I even flew when I was there as a colonel, when I was in APP [Aviation, Plans and Programs], I had a waiver and I flew F-4s out at Andrews.

ALLISON: That's when you were employed with [General John R. Dailey] "Zorro?"

NYLAND: Zorro and I, yes, we'd take that F-4 and go to conferences. Great.

ALLISON: Okay, we sort of talked about this where you talked about changing your quarters, that social routine. Were you--you did some of the parades to--,

NYLAND: Oh heck yeah. Well, usually what happens on the Friday night parades is each three star hosts one and the Commandant usually picks anywhere from three to five or six that he particularly wants to host, and the ACMC usually picks two to four. But, since I lived at the Barracks, I probably attended 75 percent of them. But on a social event, you could've been two places every night of the week. Initially, I probably tried to be at too many of them. Finally, I told Jeanne and the EA [executive assistant], I said, "Only three during the week, I'll do the weekends, but only three during the week," because it was getting really, really, I needed some rest. And I mean, all great events, and great people, and people you want to spend time with, but you--just finally you have to go, "I need a little bit of downtime in here." So, that's what I went to, three a week, unless there was something that needed four-star presence.

But it was busy. But it was important to all people that wanted to hear what was going on, people that are often influential, or have good ideas, and so it's important to be there; that's part of the territory. The way I looked at it was, hey, if I could make it, I would go because I was blessed enough to be selected for this position or any of the positions that wore stars, and this comes with the territory. That's just the way you do it, and so I did. I mean, I enjoyed it, it was great. You never really know--I just never really knew that you're tired, but after I retired and I came back, I saw somebody up there when I went to a parade or something, they said, "God, you look younger."

ALLISON: I think you lost weight too.

NYLAND: I did.

ALLISON: Do you have time to PT every day too?

NYLAND: No. Very sporadic. I did pretty good when I was in Aviation, but once I became ACMC, it was just pretty hard. There were so many meetings and so much going on, and it was real sporadic for me. Then they opened up the new POAC [Pentagon Officers Athletic

Club], which that made it more difficult because it wasn't easy to get in and out of like the old one, and so mine was pretty sporadic as ACMC. Particularly, when you got the QDR and the BRAC going on, there was hardly an hour without a meeting. But I still run now, trying to make up for it.

ALLISON: How far do you normally run?

NYLAND: I run three days a week. It's usually a little over three miles. I have a little track around my house that I go to. Enough that I don't have to buy new suits.

ALLISON: Okay, sir. Did you come in contact with the President or the Secretary of the Defense?

NYLAND: SecDef a lot. Not so much with POTUS [President of the US]. A couple of events where I got to meet him, and the most memorable one for me was right before I retired; he spoke at the Naval Academy's graduation in the summer of 2005. So CNO was up there to administer the oath to all the ensigns, and I administered the oath to all the second lieutenants. And then the three of us stood there and shook all of their hands.

ALLISON: There with the President?

NYLAND: Yes. And before that, we're in the tent in the back talking to him, and I had met him once or twice otherwise. Actually, I spent more time with his father. Bush 41 when I was a colonel on the Joint Staff. And then when I was two stars, he used to come in to fish down in Carteret County, saltwater fishing. He'd come down there in a private plane, and we'd always meet him and so I've got a couple of handwritten notes from him for that, he autographed his book for me, and--

ALLISON: So you would have to meet his plane as the Wing commander?

NYLAND: Oh sure. Oh yes.

ALLISON: Get out there and meet his plane.

NYLAND: Yes. So anyway, but both of them, both wonderful individuals, a true concern about the people. Genuine. I enjoyed them both; I think the world of both of them.

ALLISON: Now Rumsfeld's still Secretary of Defense, too?

NYLAND: Yes, he was SecDef all the way once he came in, and I met Mr. [Robert] Gates afterwards because of what I do with capstone. But, I'm pretty sure Rumsfeld, he was still there all the way through my tenure.

ALLISON: As you go back in 2004, did his perspective on things change? The common view is that he thought Iraq would be handled like Afghanistan, not a limited war, but a very efficiently run war, minimal forces, and he's always been castigated for Phase Four, lack of Phase Four training. Comments?

NYLAND: Well, I think it was the--I guess there was a sort of a sense, that after Saddam came out, that they would revert. Back in the mid-50s, Iraq was one of the strong democracies in the Middle East; and so they had a history of understanding governance and having departments of transportation, finance and a treasury, and judges, and maybe there was just the too much thought that they could go back to this. But I think everyone came to realize that after 30 plus years under a dictator, there are not a lot of guys willing to raise their right hand and say, "I can do that, or I'll take that one on." So, you couple that with some of the decisions that were made that allowed, that dismantled the Baath army. I think that instinct was not anticipated.

Like I said, when I was there in August and September, I mean it looked like things were going to go pretty good; and who knows, it might've been able to go pretty well had [Lewis Paul] Bremer [III] and/or [Department of] State arrived with enough people to do what those lieutenant colonels were doing. Had they'd been able to put a five-man team in each one of those governances that could reach back to Baghdad and get things done, maybe it would've been different. I don't know. I guess no one will ever know that. But because we didn't have that level of manning, with the State, and Bremer, and his outfit, I don't think anybody really foresaw how fanatical these guys and gals would be after four months of not getting anything that looked like progress to them; they decided to bring it back on.

ALLISON: Plus Al Qaeda coming in.

NYLAND: And Al Qaeda is turning it up. So there was--I think there was not a--I think there's a fair amount of truth in not an overly aggressive Phase Four planning. But I think that may have been, in my mind, tempered by the fact that we thought that people would step up to the plate, given an opportunity to go back to a democracy that had been one of the strongest in the region. It turns out, I guess after, kind of like the Stockholm syndrome; after 30 years, you raise your right hand, you lose your right hand, you learn not to raise it. I don't know. Hindsight is always great; hindsight is always 20-20.

But there were a couple of key decisions, I think, that were made when Bremer and those guys came in there that I think everybody would've loved to have seen how it might've turned out without them, it might've been different.

ALLISON: Like the Baath army thing?

NYLAND: Yes. And not using the great governance model the military had set up. Then that got right back to the badging units because now we have a very different Phase Four. Instead of drawing folks out, we're putting in and the numbers are growing. So it was--and we modeled, and the Joint Staff, the J-8 guys, were modeling these, war gaming this, and trying to figure out the assets. I mean, this was PhD work figuring out what units could come and do that, and then not break them for the sustainment period so they could come back. It was a major, major effort, and everybody had a role.

ALLISON: The Reserves played a huge role.

NYLAND: Huge role. We used battalions and all the aviation assets, and yes, they were terrific. And our Reserves, really, were, I think, sort of the model because we had years ago made the investment that we put forth, so there's a full-time staff, there was training conducted, they stay up with the current kind of tactics and things. So, our folks, they came back in, and instead of a six-month workup program, I mean, 30 days and they are, boom, they're ready to go, and they're trace by trace with active duty battalions and performing magnificently.

ALLISON: Yes, plus they had the same equipment, instead of having the old stuff like they used to in old days.

NYLAND: Right, they got the same, same, same.

ALLISON: So that wasn't that hard of a decision, except for just mobilize--

NYLAND: Yes, getting them mobilized. Plus our IRR [Individual Ready Reserve]—we'd used our IRR, too, so these young folks, they got a two-year term, where they really don't even have to do anything. But we asked them to check in, so we knew where they were, and we knew how to get at them, and so we brought in the IRR too; and we were the first service to use any IRR because we knew they were there, we knew what their obligation was. So they had this two-year commitment after their four years active duty, and we kept track of them and we used them.

ALLISON: Alright. Moving back to the Osprey. Let me take a break for a minute.

[The recorder was stopped for a moment.]

ALLISON: We had been talking about the--I had started to ask you about the Osprey.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: Now, VMX-22 [Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron 22] stands-up at this time, and we had discussed that a little bit. Any other comments on the progress of the Osprey, and be it noted that while you were ACMC, it did pass its OpEval [Operational Evaluation].

NYLAND: Yes, it did.

ALLISON: So, any comments on the Osprey coming along?

NYLAND: Well, I think you will never erase the tragedy of those lost lives; but the program, subsequent to that, had the kind of attention that it needed to make it the success that it has become. And when we started looking at those "A" model airplanes and cleaning up those nacelles, and looking at the software, and started leaning towards the "B" model, and even thinking about what "C" model would have, put that thing on the kind of footing that led to its successful introduction into Iraq, even ahead of its supply ready date, I think those lost lives were not in vain. Tragic to lose them, but not in vain. And their contribution is forever in what that airplane has become.

But I think with the VMX and Glenn Walters, Bluto, and what he did and his team did, and the level of effort between Bell and Boeing, and Headquarters Marine Corps, and NavAir, to sit down to put this program together in a professional executable way, and then come out with an A-1 product on the far end, it really started following that blue ribbon panel; because it really gave now the other panels that would assemble, to build acquisition strategy and the DT [developmental testing] and OT [operational testing], a really good vehicle from which to build a roadmap. It's really quite a marvel. And to think it had--in time, over time it has become exactly what was envisioned way back in the mid-80s as a capability and what it could bring, certainly for the Marines, but, ultimately I think, for the nation.

ALLISON: Especially when you think about the number of lives that it's probably saved by just expediting medevacs.

NYLAND: The speed with which it travels around Afghanistan is phenomenal.

ALLISON: Cutting down that Golden hour time, as they call it.

NYLAND: Yes, so medevacs, even resupply, I mean emergency resupply, it's terrific, it's really heartwarming to see.

ALLISON: I meant to ask you one thing on MROC, but the move of the History Division from the Navy Yard down to Quantico. Do you remember any issues in that?

NYLAND: Well I remember it was like most changes, most people didn't like it. But it actually started under Mike Williams, and it came to an ultimate conclusion when I was there. I think it was the right decision. Maybe we didn't plan for it as well, and inculcate the ideas into people as well as we might have. But I think having the History Division that close to the National Museum of the Marine Corps, and that close to the University and the Gray Research Library, makes great sense to me. And where we were in the Navy Yard, it was small, it was cramped. It was nice because it was convenient to the Headquarters, more so than anything else; but I think in the end, it was the right move to go down there. And I think [Major General Donald R.] Gardner was one of the guys who did an awful lot to make that come together well. I thank him for all the work that he did, most to make it come to fruition and every effort that he did to make it line up with logic and the understanding of doing it. And so, I think at some point, ideally, when phase three of the museum is complete, there'll be a place in there for the History Division, or at least for some of the people, and I think it's the right place. And another thing, I think that probably part of the reason that it moved was because it didn't really have a daddy.

ALLISON: Up at Headquarters.

NYLAND: It had the ACMC.

ALLISON: After General [Edwin H.] Simmons left.

NYLAND: Right. So, after General Simmons was gone, and was there at the Navy Yard, but it didn't have someone that took after the care and feeding all the time. It had ACMC when something wasn't going right, or when something was needed, and I think that, in part too, made sense to give it a home. Where does it nest? Where does it reside? And then the budget is built in with the budget, and sent over to P & R and looking for eraser dust to fund a problem, or fund the program.

So I think all those things combined, and I was comfortable with the decision, and I think it's the right place. You may not agree. I know that John Ripley really didn't want to see it happen, God bless him. But I think he'd be proud to see what you all are doing now,

and how it has turned out, and he probably, but God bless him, is watching. I think between the space, no daddy, and then in alignment with the Museum and with the University all made an awful lot of good, really good, sense.

ALLISON: Yes. They're adding on big time to the Gray Research Center now.

NYLAND: Yes on that back side?

ALLISON: Yes.

NYLAND: I think that's perfect; why wouldn't you? I mean, and right there to help either the students at Command and Staff, or EWS [Expeditionary Warfare School], or even an old guy like me who comes in and wants to find something from--something triggered in my failing memory and I can't remember enough about it.

ALLISON: That's what we're there for, and that's why we collect oral history to try to get those memories.

NYLAND: I think it's terrific, and I appreciate it. Thanks to you and your team. Like I told you last night, I really appreciate the prep that you put into it, because your prep and what you give me certainly stimulates a lot more in my mind than when I'm normally thinking about when I'm out there trimming my hedges.

ALLISON: Hopefully it doesn't bring back too many bad memories.

NYLAND: No, I don't have any bad memories. I think all the bad ones fade away. I loved it, still do, and it's terrific.

ALLISON: I sure appreciate your support of Marine Corps history. But back on the budget, you have a lot of supplemental fundings going on, and it seemed like there were some angst about that, and then having to do rapid acquisitions of a lot of gear that you needed to fight the war. Was that a big problem for you as ACMC, or was that P & R--?

NYLAND: It was kind of there for everybody, so I didn't really see it. I never really understood for sure why there--why they didn't like the supplementals. I mean, the truth be known, that's kind of like making the budget more of a living document to me. So the plan was, for instance, let's say at the end of 2005 we'd be down to one division in four separate battalions, but in truth and fact we're still in two divisions. Well, we budgeted against a thought. The fact that that didn't occur, the supplemental only addresses the fact that the level of conflict sustained itself instead of coming down as we had hoped.

So, I get it, we should be able to forecast as well as we can. But when your basic assumptions don't come true, there needs to be some recourse. You can't just take it from somewhere else, we all know what would happen to that; that will come out of the supporting forces to make sure that the operating forces have it. Now we built an even bigger problem for the out years at the bases and stations where we took the money.

So I think there needs to be recognition on both sides. The services certainly need to do their very best planning, and they need to understand their assumptions and the potential for those assumptions being realized or not realized. But OSD and the Hill need to also understand that planned against assumptions that everybody signed up to, when they don't come to pass, then there needs to be an outlet, and the outlet should be monies from somewhere else other than telling the service to go find it, because we always find it, and we always take it out of either readiness or bases and stations, and then we create a problem that takes even longer to correct than the few short months it took to put the paint on them. So, there were like lines in the sand almost over them. Okay. No more supplementals. Well, okay, got it. But, sooner or later we had to have it, so now they call them OCO money.

ALLISON: They call it GWOT [Global War on Terrorism] now.

NYLAND: Yes. So, they changed the name, but the truth is, we've had supplementals for many, many years.

ALLISON: Somebody told me that Vietnam was fought on supplementals.

NYLAND: I don't know, I couldn't tell you. You couldn't prove it by me, I was just a lieutenant down there, dropping bombs and eating C-Rats [C Rations]. I understand we do need to be--we need to be good stewards, we need to plan. But there are things, when your assumptions don't come true, that I think we have to have an ability to react to that without breaking something else inside an individual organization, be the service, be it the Department of Homeland Security, or whatever it is. And so, I think it needs to be a little more understanding on both sides.

You think about when we start building these budgets, how far out we build them, we start a couple years in advance. By the time it goes down and gets through all the bean counters at the DON, at OSD, at OMB, and gets to the Hill, and they take their look at it, you're assumptions already are a year old, maybe two. That's tough.

ALLISON: So you need supplementals?

NYLAND: I think there's a place for supplementals.

ALLISON: It gives you the flexibility.

NYLAND: And I think if the National Command Authority tells you to go do this, the National Command Authority ought to find the resources for you to do it properly and do not break your force.

ALLISON: Now, I also saw that there was a budget crunch going on, I think there was a potential crunch. But I believe in 2005 my sources--resources says that we had 22 Ospreys that were cut, they downsized the Osprey buy--

NYLAND: I don't remember it specifically, but it doesn't surprise me. And I mean we watched the same thing happen with the Joint Strike Fighter. We have a habit of, when the cost goes up because we didn't anticipate it, or price it properly at OSD, especially, to just move them to the out year. So, in other words, instead of buying them all now, you move 22 of them out, and match four--and that's four across--or five each of the years past the budget year, and that saves money for that budget year, but the problem is it increases the cost in the out years. The same thing happened with the Joint Strike Fighter, so they pushed the buy to the right, and what happens? Then when they get ready to buy them, they're going to be--it's going to be more expensive because we didn't reach scale of economy knee in the curve earlier and get the airplanes at the cheap rate.

So, did we lose 22? Probably so. We may have lost some of them in negotiations inside the DON to pay bills, and we may have lost some at OSD when OSD says okay, we'll just buy fewer, we'll put them in the out year. What that does is, you get fewer for the money now, and you get fewer for the money later. So to me, it's a catch 22. I mean I got it, you got to balance the budget, but you hurt so many things when you fund these things in cycles like that. You hurt industry, you hurt the service, and you hurt the planning for the nation. That's why I am a big fan of multi-year procurement, because once you put it in there at least you have a bottom floor and you can't go jerking your procurement around.

So I worry that oftentimes we're a penny wise for the third year, but were pound foolish for the following four because there's a lot to be said about getting up on a step or the knee of a curve and the ability to make these things at a cost efficient rate over continuing to reach for that point in the curve. But, yes, I don't even remember the numbers, but I'm certain that we did lose them, and I know that we've lost--you pick a type, model, series, at

one time or another we've lost them either in our own negotiations inside the DON to pay bills that we get handed as our share, or at OSD. And quite honestly, look at the Hill. The Hill, they have changed the quantities as well, or they change the money, and then they change money and we can only get certain quantities, or they plus them up.

We've been very blessed and very fortunate over the years in one airplane in particular, with the case of KC-130s. We got 24 T [models] at the largess of Congressman Joe Addabo of New York he put them in the budget every year. Now--right now, we're--I think we have four extra KC-130Js, and the budget is reading six from the Hill, they've added two. They recognize the utility; they know that we have had down years before where we would've had up years. But, nonetheless, these numbers always are going to move. And so, we probably did give up 22 one year, but it would've been a combination in my mind of those three actors all playing; ourselves, when we're playing inside the DON, OSD. OSD can change the quantities so much, and the Hill surely does. So, because it's so much of that going on, that number doesn't stick out at me because there--you can't tell me a type, model, series that we flown since I've been in that hasn't had cuts, some self- generated, some done because we owed bills, some by people outside the department.

ALLISON: Was there ever a temptation to buy, replacement equipment, or replacement aircraft instead of continuing to try to get the new stuff, the transformational stuff, the Joint Strike Fighter, why not build just AV-8Bs?

NYLAND: Well, the [assembly] lines are cold, for one. So, actually, we've tried to do replacements, but we've tried to do replacements with new. So we lost a couple of Phrogs [CH-46s] and we asked to put another MV-22 in the budget. So, we tried--we certainly want to maintain a capability, but in my experience, we've always tried to look forward with that ask, particularly over the last ten years when we had these big supplementals and losses and things to say, "Okay, I lost that Phrog, I'm going to need that in my medium lift requirement, that would be an MV-22. So, can we add one into the budget year or whatever? No, it will be time, you're not going to get any Phrog. We don't have any airplane still in production. No hotlines. Look across them, there's none. Other than the four-bladed Huey/Cobra, that's it. And even those, we ultimately found out that we couldn't even use the cabins on most of them because when they were built, they're so old they were all built with the touch labor so the holes don't line up. If I take an engine cowling off a bird that was built in 1961 and

another one from 1963, they don't necessarily line up because we didn't have computer aided drawing and drilling and things like that. So, we ended up having to buy new cabins for them, and mostly new cabins for the Cobras. But now what we've got is an airplane that's basically all brand-new; drive train, new cabin, great capability.

But there's--I think there's always an effort to kind of try to look forward. There were probably times when I was a young guy when the F-4 was still being made, when we did some things like that, and early on when the C's and D's [F/A-18s] were still being made, we--for instance, there was--and I'll get this--one of either Singapore or Malaysia, anyway, they were, they were buying F-18D's, and something went wrong with their deal and so we were able to get those D model airplanes for the Marine Corps. But now, there's no warm lines on anything anymore that we're flying.

ALLISON: Which would've been a temptation to get the [F/A-18] E and the F.?

NYLAND: Nope.

ALLISON: No temptation?

NYLAND: Because that--because we already knew how to maintain C's and D's, we didn't have the supply for E's and F's, and we had made the decision years ago to skip that generation to get to the joint strike fighter that would be STOVL [short take-off vertical landing]. So no inkling or desire to go down that road, and I think that's the way it will stay. Now, quite honestly, the Navy may well, if they get another multi-year procurement, they may slow down on the F-35 Charlie models, or may who knows, they may not get the Charlie models depending on how all this budget turmoil turns out and sequestration.

ALLISON: And then the Marine Corps would be the only one flying the Joint Strike Fighter.

NYLAND: Well the Air Force.

ALLISON: And the Air Force.

NYLAND: They're using the CTOL [conventional take off and landing].

ALLISON: It's hard to believe the Navy would do that.

NYLAND: Well, I don't think so, but I mean, if you read the papers and you can get any scenario you want out of it from any of these would-be experts from the think tanks. So, that was one that I read the other day. I said, "Well, I don't think so, but maybe. Who knows?"

ALLISON: If it'll sell a paper.

NYLAND: Yes.

ALLISON: Well, you have Iraq going on and Afghanistan, you have to send a MEU [Marine expeditionary unit] into Afghanistan, the 22nd MEU, and then you have other NEOs [non-combatant operations], and you have an NEO in Liberia at this time, and then have to go back to Iraq, or go to Haiti. That's got to be difficult to find--again, you talked about the badges and stuff like that, but those pop-up commitments, humanitarian operations and stuff like that, doesn't that take a lot of resources?

NYLAND: Well of course, Haiti was after I was retired. But all those others, for me, that's what we think we do for America. I mean, that's what we think those forward deployed naval forces, and specifically in those instances the ARG [amphibious ready group]/MEU, and that's one of the reasons why they continued to float through all the other. Now, that clearly put a strain on the force as far as dwell times. But nonetheless, doing those things, I submit, proves the utility of the concept, it proves the utility of forward deployed naval forces, it proves the utility of amphib ships who can do everything from bring supplies and food, to carry ammo, and sustain forces ashore. So, demanding? You bet. I don't think we'd want it any other way.

I think it's known that when America calls, we can be there, we can make a difference, and we can do it today, we can be there today. We're already out there close to it. We're not thinking we're going to go help, we're ready to help, and we're close. So, to me, it's tough on the people, but essential to the Nation.

But I'll tell you another thing; here's an interesting statistic: You know where we get our highest reenlistment before we had all the Iraq and everything? From Marines who were on the MEUs. They're forward deployed, they're doing what they decided to do when they went into Marine Corps, they're out forward doing something. They didn't sign up to spend four years at Camp Lejeune, and the Marine Corps is a youthful organization, 60 percent are young men and women. So, when we were cycling those MEUs, and now even during Iraq, we had people that were cross decking to go back, it's what they signed up to do, and so they reenlist. And so, America gets an incredible deal.

ALLISON: You said before Iraq and Afghanistan. So, you mean--

NYLAND: Even still inside too, but you go back to the time when just a normal day ops, but we're doing a NEO here, or we're doing a disaster relief here, or show of force there, we're there.

ALLISON: But Iraq and Afghanistan surpass those numbers. Is that what you meant by that?

NYLAND: Well, no, what I'm saying is, in normal times, the guys and gals who reenlist at the highest rate are on the MEUs, in the MEU units because they're deployed. So now even though we're running hard for the last ten years, they're still raising their hands.

ALLISON: I see.

NYLAND: I mean, we--I think the last year that I was on active duty, we had closed out our first term reenlistments by the end of June, and our career enlistments, which would be our NCOs and staff NCOs, before September.

ALLISON: For the fiscal year?

NYLAND: Yes. Quality people and turning others away. So, that tells you something. Now, am I tired? Yes. But I'm tired with a smile, because I'm doing for my country what I thought I would do for my country when I signed on the dotted line.

ALLISON: Right. They're making a contribution.

NYLAND: Yes, it's a double-edged sword, tough on families, no question, tough on home life. But for feeling as though you're making a difference in contributing to what your nation has asked you to do, it doesn't get any better.

ALLISON: Which is pretty interesting when you think about the beginning of your career in Vietnam. You know that was not the situation in Vietnam, people coming out of Vietnam.

NYLAND: People didn't like us when we came home.

ALLISON: But you couldn't have gotten the reenlistment numbers in those days.

NYLAND: Oh heck no, heck no. And we over grew the Marine Corps. We paid huge penalties in the 1970s for having done that. But now, boy, we got just an incredibly talented force, all the forces. Particularly in the Marines, you got young corporals who end up being squad leaders and platoon commanders calling in air, calling in medevacs [medical evacuations], leading their Marines.

ALLISON: Highly motivated.

NYLAND: Unbelievable experiences, and talent that we have, and what's the heartbreaker for coming down in size? So the best trained, best equipped, most savvy, most experienced, and we're having to tell some of these really great young folks you're magnificent and we thank you, but the door's right over there.

ALLISON: And sequestration.

NYLAND: Well, that too. But I mean, even just coming down to 182. So, it's an all-balancing act and it's tough, and you hope in the end that it's balanced, based on strategy, not financing; but some days you wonder.

ALLISON: Okay sir, before we leap off into the next big issue, would you want to knock it off for the day?

NYLAND: Yes, you want to pull the plug today and--?

ALLISON: If it's okay with you.

NYLAND: Sure, it works for me, I'm at your disposal.

ALLISON: Well.

[Recorder is turned back on.]

NYLAND: I never knew that, and I had nowhere to go to find that. My other grandfather who was a civil engineer "Seabee' [Navy construction battalions], after he retired, was recalled to active duty and he built the U.S. cemetery--military cemetery in Manila. I knew none of those things when they were alive, never got to thank him, never got to hear them tell it in their terms. So, things like this to me, I think, are cool because there's a record. And if someone has the interest, if my great great grandson someday says, "Oh yeah, you know my great, great grandfather was a Marine, maybe I can find something on him," maybe he could find this. Wouldn't that be--?

ALLISON: Probably could. This is going to be in the Marine Corps archives forever and ever, and in the Naval Aviation Museum archives.

HEFFERNAN: You know about all the training records that are out at our storage building.

NYLAND: To be anything in the Marine Corps, you need to show the Marine Corps that you can do something besides fly that airplane. And better you pick the time to come out of the cockpit, than some guy, faceless guy up there, who's got your record book on his desk. So you really ought to think about if you're going to stick around, when's a good time to

come out and do a tour in Washington for the first time. And they'd look at me, but then 20 years, and they'd go, "Wow, you knew what you were talking about."

HEFFERNAN: Is there a book in your future?

NYLAND: Oh, no.

ALLISON: This book right here.

NYLAND: Yes, this is it. Because this is the best, it's the best ever, and it's been my philosophy all of my life.

HEFFERNAN: Weren't you the guest speaker at the last symposium Marine meeting?

NYLAND: I had the panel--I had a Marine panel, I had all the youngsters, all the captains, and one major.

ALLISON: At Tailhook?

NYLAND: No, I did the one at Tailhook, too. But this one was here and we had, in the May symposium, and we had an across-the-board every type, model, series, either a captain in one case, in the Cobra case, a major with recent combat experience, including a lady [UH-1] Huey driver, and their thoughts on--and we had some questions that we put together and stuff.

HEFFERNAN: I was running a camera for that, I was on your left-hand.

NYLAND: Left side.

HEFFERNAN: That was me, and when Cera Benbow, the Huey driver, she got going on her story, I forgot all about the camera. "Holy, shit." So I had her and she's giving me two hours of interview. She's fabulous. We have her on the display over here. She contributed her flight suit and gear and all that stuff. You need to go over and check that out.

NYLAND: I will, I will. She's a dynamite gal. I was back up to Whiting--

HEFFERNAN: Flight deck experience. When you first go into that, we have a COD [carrier on-board delivery] that you arrive on, and I knew a crew chief that would do the brief I talked Sarah into--

NYLAND: It could've gone longer, but I felt like the audience would have sustained their level of interest had we gone maybe another half an hour. But we were out of clock time. Same with the one we did at Tailhook.

I had [Dan] "Knuckle"s Shipley, I had Fred McCorkle, and me, Hap Simpson, Manfred Rietsch, and Charlie Bolden, and we did the panel at Tailhook, because last year

they dedicated it to Marine aviation. So, that panel, I had guys coming up to me saying, "That's the best panel I've ever seen here," and these guys were dynamite. All I had to do is set them up and they would just go.

ALLISON: You're talking about their combat experiences?

NYLAND: Yes.

HEFFERNAN: The first time I met Fred was when he asked if we had a Charlie Bolden interview.

NYLAND: We have five general officers out of my class, Chip Gregson, Charlie Bolden, me, Jack Klimp, and Wayne Rollings. It's not quite one platoon because two of them came out of one platoon, but five of our guys--two of them two stars, two three stars, and me. I graduated 4 December 1968.

Here's another one for you. In the old days, I don't think they do this now, when they give them their wings, they don't give you a number, like designation number. My number was G4567. I told him they gave it to me because I had a little trouble with my reciprocal headings. One of your jobs as a leader was to create an atmosphere where people are happy about what they're doing. How can you not do that if you don't have fun with them, or at their expense, or at your own expense with them? I just, I sometimes think, just like back to the Hill when they try to solve safety with a gizmo, I think we can solve most of these things if we just have the right kind of dialogue, with the right people, at the right time.

HEFFERNAN: There a lot of commanders that say they have an open door policy, but it doesn't really exist.

NYLAND: Yes, but mine did. I had a young sergeant one time and he says, "Sir, Can I tell you something?" I said, "Well, sure Sergeant Morrotic." "The men do not want to come to officer hours with you," and I said "Well, that's a good thing isn't it?" And he said, "Well, yes, sir," but he says "They're all afraid that the earth will open up and swallow them." I held office hours in formation one day; within the first week Iwakuni and I had a couple of Marines to do something really stupid, up at Kintai Castle, so I had office hours in formation. And then once again, there was never any doubt about my expectations for the Marines.

I had one guy come up to me, I was at the 75th birthday for the Red Devils and this guy walks up to me and said, "I know you." And he said "Do you know my name?" I said, "Yes, you're Private Demeny." He said, "How do you remember?" I said, "How can I

forget you?" He said, "Yes, I came to office hours three times, didn't I?" And I said, "Yes you did." And he said, "I want you to know, sir, that's the best thing that ever happened to me, I'm an engineer now, and I work in a heating air-conditioning firm in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Thank you."

END OF SESSION VIII
END OF INTERVIEW

INDEX

B

C

D

E

F

G

K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

W

X

Y

Z