

# ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

Lieutenant General Bernard E. Trainor

U.S. Marine Corps (Ret)



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Quantico, Virginia

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Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

*LtGen Bernard Trainor retired from the U.S. Marine Corps after more than 35 years of service.*



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## FOREWORD

This volume is the transcribed oral history of Lieutenant General Bernard E. Trainor, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret). It is the result of a 10-session interview conducted by former Chief Historian Benis M. Frank on behalf of the Marine Corps Oral History Program and a single interview conducted by Major Terrence P. Murray. This transcript is the work of several individuals, most importantly Lieutenant General Trainor, who committed many hours of his personal time to complete this project. Others who assisted were Dr. Fred H. Allison; Angela Anderson, head of the History Division's Editing and Design Branch; Jennifer Clampet, who reviewed and edited the transcript; and William S. Hill of Editing and Design, who laid out the photos and graphics.

The Oral History Program is 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 experiences, perspectives, and opinions herein are solely those of the interviewee and interviewer. The final product is a bound transcript containing historically valuable personal narratives relating to noteworthy professional experiences and observations of distinguished Marines. While Lieutenant General Trainor has reviewed and made amendments to the transcript, readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than the written word.

Copies of this transcript are archived in the Marine Corps Oral History Collection at Quantico, Virginia. Others are distributed to appropriate offices and libraries in the Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy as well as research libraries maintained by the U.S. Army and Air Force.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "C.P. Neimeyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer  
Director of Marine Corps History



## LIEUTENANT GENERAL BERNARD E. TRAINOR, USMC (Ret)

### Biography

Lieutenant General Bernard E. Trainor enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps at the end of World War II and was called to active duty in 1946. Private Trainor attended recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, South Carolina. Later he was selected for officer training under the Holloway Program (later Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps [NROTC]) and assigned to Holy Cross College, Worcester, Massachusetts, as a midshipman Marine option. Upon graduation in June 1951, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant and attended The Basic School in Quantico, Virginia, until December 1951. He then joined the 1st Marine Division (1st MarDiv) in Korea, where he served as an infantry platoon leader with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines.

Returning from overseas, his next assignment was as assistant S-3 (operations) with the 8th Marines, 2d Marine Division, followed by a tour of sea duty on the USS *Columbus* (CA 74). He was promoted to captain and was detachment commander until 1955. He then served as a staff officer with Headquarters Marine Corps in Washington, DC. Captain Trainor next served on exchange duty with the Royal Marine Commandos, where he commanded Alpha Troop, 45 Commando, on the island of Malta. In 1959, he rejoined 1st MarDiv and served successively as a company commander in reconnaissance, antitank, and infantry battalions (3d Battalion, 5th Marines).

His Fleet Marine Force tour was followed by NROTC duty at the University of Colorado. Major Trainor then attended the Marine Corps Command and Staff College at Quantico in 1964. Upon graduation and before going to Vietnam, he attended a Special Forces course at U.S. Army installation Fort Bragg, North Carolina. In Vietnam, he served in an unconventional warfare unit (special operations group [SOG]). The unit's operations remained classified until publicly recognized in 2001 by award of a Presidential Unit Citation for heroism. Returning from Vietnam, Trainor taught at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College until 1969, at which time he attended the U.S. Air Force's Air War College in Montgomery, Alabama. Upon graduation as a distinguished graduate and recipient of the Air University's Anderson Memorial Award for politico-military thought, Lieutenant Colonel Trainor returned to Vietnam where he commanded 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, and subsequently the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion. He had the honor of returning the latter's battalion colors to the United States and presented them before President Richard M. Nixon as part of 1st MarDiv's homecoming parade in 1971.

He then reported to Headquarters Marine Corps as a joint plans officer and was promoted to colonel. In 1974, he was reassigned to New York City as director of the 1st Marine District, responsible for recruiting and reserve matters in the northeastern states. Selected for brigadier general in 1976, he reported to Parris Island as assistant depot commander, until ordered to Quantico in 1978 as director of the Marine Corps Education Center in the grade of major

general. In 1981, he assumed the duties of director of Plans Division at Headquarters Marine Corps until his appointment to lieutenant general as deputy chief of staff for Plans, Policies, and Operations and Marine Corps deputy to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1983. The general retired from active duty on 30 June 1985.

Lieutenant General Trainor has been awarded the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, two Legions of Merit, a Bronze Star, and two Navy Commendation Medals—all with Combat “V”—as well as the Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential and Navy Unit Citations, three Vietnam Crosses of Gallantry with silver stars, and the Vietnamese Honor Medal (First Class). He wears the Navy-Marine parachute wings and holds two campaign stars for Korea and four for Vietnam. In 2001, while in retirement, he was awarded the Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Service for matters relating to Korea. Lieutenant General Trainor holds a master’s degree in history and did advanced study for a PhD while at the University of Colorado. He and his wife Peggy live in Potomac Falls, Virginia, and have four daughters.



## U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lieutenant General Bernard E. "Mick" Trainor, USMC (Ret)  
Interviewer: Mr. Benis M. Frank  
Place: Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, DC  
Date: 12 December 1985

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### SESSION I

Frank: This is an interview session with Lieutenant General Bernard E. Trainor, USMC, (Ret). It's being conducted at the Marine Corps Historical Center in Washington on 12 December 1985. At the time that the 32d MAU [32d Marine Amphibious Unit] was committed to help withdraw the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] [from Beirut, Lebanon, in 1983], you were director of Plans, Policies, and Operations [PP&O] at Headquarters [Marine Corps]?

Trainor: Correct.

Frank: Okay. Now, a NEO [noncombatant evacuation operation] was always part of the mission of a MAU attached to the [U.S.] Sixth Fleet, and this was part of the coordinated training, right?

Trainor: That's right.

Frank: Now, what's the chronology? What happened? What's the scenario?

Trainor: Well, basically the stalemate before Beirut with the Israelis and the PLO. The Israelis, as we understood, did have plans to attack into the city to destroy the PLO. However, they had reckoned that it was going to be a pretty bloody operation, as any house-to-house fighting in a built-up area would [be].

Frank: And well dug in.

Trainor: Well dug in and [they] had tremendous assets: ammunition, weapons, and so forth. As a matter of fact, one of the Israeli unit commanders, a battalion commander, turned in his suit in opposition because he just wasn't going to do it because of the casualties; and the Israelis had already taken substantial casualties with the unexpected efficiency of the Syrians when they were driving up to Lebanon and the PLO itself. So the Israelis were faced with a difficult situation, and a deal was struck to get the PLO fighters out of the area and spread them around other Arab nations. In other words, they would not all go into one particular place. This then, would provide the basis for ultimate Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. Implicit in that arrangement, in which the U.S. was a player—and I don't have the details because that was carved outside the purview of the JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff]—but implicit in that was that the U.S. would give its bona fides, along with the other nation involved, France, to the well-being of the families of the PLO fighters who were being evacuated. So the French went in first and secured the pier area, and then the Marines sailed in and landed and, in a cooperative venture with the French,

provided a haven into which the PLO would come—would funnel in—in an orderly fashion and load aboard ships and depart. The thing went off swimmingly well. Some tense moments occurred, however; the PLO had the habit of firing weapons in the air as a sign of celebration, and there was an attempt of PLOs not authorized to come on to the pier area and go aboard ship[s], to kind of run the line at the time that [Yasser] Arafat was coming out. The Marines had to settle them down and improve the lines with vehicles, with Marines with . . . [Stop in tape] The whole thing came off rather well. Then the Marines regrouped, the French did too, and everybody went about their business. My recollection is that the Marines went on up to Naples, [Italy,] and were on liberty in Italy when we had two sequential events which were to prove to be disastrous. Number one was the explosion that killed the older [actually younger] [Bachir] Gemayel, who was [to be] the president [of Lebanon], followed by the Sabra-Shatila massacre.

Now, you must know that the JCS . . . and while I was the plans officer, in my JCS role, I was the JCS operations deputy, so I attended the various JCS meetings. There was a reluctance to get involved with the PLO evacuation. It was a political decision.

Frank: Initially?

Trainor: Initially, yes.

Frank: Overridden by the president?

Trainor: Well, by the secretary of state, but [Secretary of Defense Caspar W.] Weinberger and the chiefs were very uncomfortable about a major nation such as the United States playing that sort of role. But there was the sensing that for political reasons, to get the Israeli agreement, the U.S. would have to participate in this. I think it should be noted that there was reluctance on the part of the chiefs to get involved in that particular operation or, generically, that type of operation.

Frank: Or in that area?

Trainor: Well, not so much in the area, but this was a political sort of mission and fraught with all sorts of potential difficulties. But it was done, all right. When Sabra-Shatila took place—in my judgment and my feeling at the time—the minute I heard about Sabra-Shatila, I said, “Back in the fire. We’ve got to go back in there.” The JCS, of course, met and discussed the matter, and I think there was a general sensing that we were morally obligated since our bona fides had been established.

Frank: We’d guaranteed their safety.

Trainor: There was no reluctance on the part of the chiefs to go back in there, or on the part of the secretary of defense. I know there’s been a lot of discussion as to why the Marines went where they did, and it made for a great [deal] of criticism because it was tactically untenable and tactically an unsound position. Well, this failed to take into account that the mission was not a military mission. It was a hand-holding mission, and its military significance was simply that the guys were in military uniform. But for the purpose of sending the forces in there, I mean you could have sent Peace

Corps guys in there, all wearing nothing but shirts. It was symbolism more than anything else, and to relieve the angst on the part of the Palestinians that were remaining and many others through the area who feared that there would be kind of a panicking and a blood bath. But the point is the Marines, in deciding where to go, had a number of considerations. One consideration was that it was felt that it would be better for U.S. forces to abut the Israelis vice the Italians or the French.

Frank: Why?

Trainor: Because of the special relationship.

Frank: Special relationship?

Trainor: The Israeli and the American relationship. Secondly, from a logistics standpoint, the airfield had obvious advantages, in that we could fly airplanes in there, plus the fact that there was a beach right off the airfield which would allow for the logistic support coming in from the ships afloat. So, from the logistic standpoint, as well as the political standpoint, it made good sense. In addition to that, and this was another very important factor, there was the feeling that we would just as soon have the Marines isolated from downtown Beirut with all the attractions and potential difficulties—attractions in the sense of the fleshpots and the Marines getting into a little trouble—although primarily it was the feeling that if you have Marines down there and patrolling, given the hatred that existed in some quarters for America as being an ally of the Israelis, that people could take potshots, and it was a lot safer to have the Marines in this isolated area out in the suburbs. So that was the background for the Marines' location. The aspect of military tenability of the terrain was never an issue. There was, in a sense, a military element to the TAOR [tactical area of responsibility], if I can use that expression. That was the road that ran into and adjacent to the airfield and into Beirut.

Frank: The Old Sidon Road?

Trainor: The Old Sidon Road, you know, as to whose area this was supposed to be in. From a technical standpoint, military standpoint, it would have been better to have that within the Marine TAOR and the Marines operating on the high ground which was just to the west of the road. But that would have overextended the forces, plus the fact that part of the agreement struck was that the Israelis could support their forces that were in the Shouf Mountains and along the Beirut-Damascus road, which was the Old Sidon Road, and they could run resupply convoys. I stress that it was a logistic line, a line of communication; it wasn't tactical access, which was agreed to with the Israelis. They would have use of the road, and the feeling was, "We don't want to be on the farside and have the Israelis going through our position because then it could appear that the Americans . . ."

Frank: Perceptions, yes.

Trainor: ". . . were protecting the Israelis." So, for that reason, we stayed [o]n the east side of the road, which was down on the low ground that was tactically . . .

Frank: The west side of the road.

Trainor: The west side of the road, I'm sorry.

Frank: Okay. You said before, the [Golan] Heights were to the east of the road below Souk el Gharb, overlooking the road.

Trainor: Yes. So the lines, then, were established. It was a very informal sort of an arrangement. The Marines set about taking care of the dead ordnance and the booby traps and the mines and so forth that ran around the airfield perimeter. They started to clear that up and as you recall we did have . . .

Frank: You lost one Marine.

Trainor: . . . one Marine killed by one of the butterfly bombs. So things settled down there, and back in the JCS there was still unease over our presence there. There was a feeling, "The sooner we get out of here, the better." And Secretary Weinberger was clearly not enamored with the idea of the Marines being there. We, ourselves, were not—we the Marines—were not enamored of it. Being ashore there in kind of a funky assignment meant that we were not available for our normal role in the Sixth Fleet as a force in readiness, so we were kind of anxious to get out of there as soon as possible. But at that point, the difficulties were still kind of vague and there was no pressure to get out of there initially. The emphasis was on, "How do we do the things that have to be done while we're there. Let's address that issue first, and then we can look into the business of getting out altogether."

Frank: I had a feeling that there was almost a sense of euphoria that the Marines went in and they were well received, their reputation was such that they didn't have to have magazines in their weapons, and just by their mere presence they were respected. Now, was that a media-type perception or was there a national perception of that?

Trainor: National—you mean here in the United States?

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: Oh, yes. I think everybody seemed to applaud the idea; the Marines were on the spot, everything was going to be okay, the Marines had landed, that sort of thing. Within country, as near as I can tell from the various communications we had from the people that were out there, was that there was a great sense of relief on the part of a large portion of the population simply because it meant that there was somebody between the Israelis and Beirut, and that a repeat of Sabra-Shatila probably would not occur. But we were well received and there was no difficulty, and indeed, there were no magazines in the weapons . . .

Frank: 'Til February.

Trainor: . . . and there didn't seem to be any need for them at that particular time. The attitude of the locals towards the Marines really increased, and they became the heroes of the area when we started to have the confrontations with the Israelis; particularly when we had the very famous incident with the captain . . .

Frank: [Charles B.] Johnson.

Trainor . . . standing down the Israeli tank commander, tank unit commander. That's when the Middle East went bonkers over praise for the Marines. But that, as subsequent events show, tended to deteriorate rapidly. What happened with the Israelis was kind of interesting. There seemed to be one Israeli officer involved, whose name escapes me right now, but he spoke English and in all these little probes and . . .

Frank: Lieutenant Colonel Raffi Steinberg, or something like that.

Trainor: Something like that, yes. He seemed to be the fellow that was at the bottom of it, and the Israelis disclaimed him. But we had a number of people working there. You had the people from the embassy were basically working the issue; you had the special envoy, [Philip C.] Habib, from the United States. You had, representing the military side of it, you had people down from EuCom [U.S. European Command] overlooking the military aspect. What the Israelis appeared to be looking for was some sort of a military council. They wanted to talk military to military rather than military to political. The U.S. was reluctant to do this because it would appear that we were conniving with the Israelis as a joint occupation force. So we avoided that.

So it appeared that what the Israelis were trying to do was to create influence, to test our will, to see what the mettle of our forces were, how well we handled small-scale crises and also to use these as illustrations of the need for some sort of corporate military council, which would include all the MNF [Multinational Force] members but particularly the U.S. representation and the Israelis. They started, their very powerful lobby in the United States, started a drumbeat of criticism and pressure against the administration's position not to enter into that sort of arrangement and started to pressure the administration. You can see the newspaper articles and so forth that, "Here you have these incidents occurring. Why don't we have the military deal with the military?" Eventually we did give in, to a degree, to the pressure.

Frank: [Colonel Thomas M.] "Tom" Stokes [Jr.] was there.

Trainor: That's right; Stokes was there at the time [inaudible]. Direct communications were established, but we never did do the sort of thing that the Israelis ultimately wanted, which was a combined sort of thing. Now the relationship with the Italians and the French and the British were good throughout the entire affair. Everybody worked well together.

We had developed an evacuation plan if things really turned sour, and we had to leave under fire. The plan was to . . . and the Marines, of course, were well schooled in this sort of amphibious withdrawal. We had a plan, which would allow the British and the French and the Italians to withdraw through the beachhead and evacuate by beach and evacuate by helicopter out of the U.S. landing zones, and we would shrink the perimeter and then eventually leave the beach. The Italians were willing to be in on this. The French, however, were not. They considered themselves independent throughout. This was on the political lever; on the military level, there was perfect cooperation between the Marines and the French.

Frank: Yes. Well, the French had a special interest in Lebanon, once having had it as a mandate.

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: And they always were looking forward to getting back to their . . . in this position. Now, back here at Headquarters, were you people looking at the worst possible situation and what would happen if, for instance, the . . . I have been told that the territory that we finally wound up with would require another MAU. In other words, one BLT [battalion landing team] could not successfully guard that amount of territory.

Trainor: Well, that's right, and you know if it were a military mission, we wouldn't have done it to begin with.

Frank: That's right.

Trainor: It was a militarily untenable position. So the numbers that were in there became a non sequitur. The issue was, "What is our role?" In terms of worst case—yes, we were thinking in worst case—and the worst case was that if we were unwelcome we would get the hell out of there. Because we were in there because of an agreement on the part of all the contending parties that we should be in there to help stabilize the situation. Now, if that situation turned and we were not wanted, then the idea was that we would get out of there. So it was either, "You want us here, and if you want us here, we don't have to have ammunition in our weapons and we are not playing any sort of a gendarme role." If there was any penetration of the Marine position, the information is passed to the LAF [Lebanese Armed Forces], and they were supposed to take action against it and our people were not to do any shooting or not to do anything threatening. And the only rules of engagement that applied were the essential rule of engagement of self-defense to protect your life or the well-being of the unit. But essentially, we were there exercising the good offices of the United States in the interest of establishing the sovereignty of Lebanon.

Frank: Now, meanwhile, up on the political level, JCS, military had a realistic view of what the scenario might be. You had contingency plans, I'm sure. But here . . . Lebanon had been fought over, and you've had these feudal, you had these family feuds going back to the eleventh and twelfth century. There was a pretty good article in the *Post* [*The Washington Post*]—"Outlook"—you probably read it, giving the history of the area. It, as it's turned out to be, looks like a no-win situation. It's almost like the Irish situation. You know, there's centuries of hate and feuds and unhappiness there, and it seems to me that the president . . . that there were some very wise people to counsel him, telling him, "Stay out of there. It's mire." Just as the military had said over the years, "Stay off the continent of Asia because you're going to get mired down in it." Apparently this perception did not reach the administration.

Trainor: Well, I'm not so sure that it didn't. I don't know who was giving the White House advice. There were certainly enough experts around . . .

Frank: Or who the White House was listening to.

Trainor: Yes. A lot of experts said, "This is a bummer; get out of there," and the most outspoken of them was the secretary of defense. The secretary of defense . . . I remember sitting in a JCS meeting and the secretary said, "Well, alright. We're there and things are stabilized, for the time being. Now, when do we get out? And what are your milestones so that we can declare that the job is over and get out?" We never did come up with those milestones because the events started to lead to war. So Weinberger throughout the entire affair was opposed to the presence of the U.S. in the area, and the sooner they got out of there the better, from his standpoint.

Frank: Why was [Secretary of State George P.] Shultz such a hawk on this thing?

Trainor: Well, I think it was—and this is just my own opinion—Shultz has, generally speaking, been pro-Israeli, and he was looking for stability in the area for its own sake and looking for some way to get the Israelis out. Of course, he drove toward the May '83 agreement . . .

Frank: May 17th, to be exact.

Trainor: . . . which was, in retrospect, disastrous. But one aspect that seems to emerge within the JCS, I would say that [Army] General [John W.] Vessey [Jr.], the [Joint Chiefs of Staff] chairman, was kind of the spokesman for this sort of approach. And I think the chiefs, while very uncomfortable with the continued presence there, pretty much went along with it—and that was that. As you have pointed out, the area had been fought over and over were divisions within the various constituencies and confessional groups within Lebanon for centuries. It is not a nation state in the sense of the Western meaning of the term; never has been.

Frank: It's an artificial . . .

Trainor: Yes, but there was this feeling that perhaps it could become a nation state if the various confessional units could pledge their allegiance to some sort of a super-confessional symbol. It was going to be in the government, which Gemayel ran, and he was viewed as Christian looking out for the Christians' interest. The thinking was that if the Lebanese Armed Forces, which had stayed in the barracks for about eight years during the fighting in Lebanon which preceded the Israeli invasion—the confessional fighting—it was a useless army, but there was one aspect to it. It was multi-confessional. The theory went you could take that multiconfessional army and have the Druze [and] the Christians pledge their allegiance to that army as a symbol of the nation that there might be some political fallout. So this is what was attempted. It was based on an erroneous assumption, an erroneous assumption that we maintained right up to the bitter end, that the army was multiconfessional, that the army could be the conduit to some sort of sovereignty in the nation, and if we helped the army, this multiconfessional army, this would bring peace to Lebanon and also allow the nation state of Lebanon to—if we just armed this multiconfessional army—to extend the sovereignty to its political boundaries. It was an error, but we persisted in this error. I think that the first step down the road toward disaster came when, in keeping with that sort of philosophy, the Lebanese unit that was adjacent to the Marines at

the airport, with the approval of [General Ibrahim] Tannous, who was the chief of staff of the Lebanese Armed Forces, asked if the Marines could assist this outfit in developing a quick reaction force—a company which would be trained in being moved by helicopter and doing quick reaction work as a company.

Frank: It was December of '82 when the 24th MAU took over the [inaudible].

Trainor: Yes, it was about that time. I remember discussing this up at Headquarters and the feeling was, “Well, hell, the Marines are sitting there; they don’t have anything to do. Marines tend to want to do something, and the thing that Marines like to do is they like to teach other people to do things. If we did help develop this company, maybe the thing would expand and we could hurry up the process of getting the Lebanese Armed Forces back on their feet so that they could take over a proper gendarme role, and we could get out of there.” So it seemed like a pretty good idea. Concurrently with that, you had the wheels set in motion to provide the equipment and the munitions to bring the Lebanese Armed Forces up to date and to sort out their chaotic logistics and supply system. All of these things were well intentioned. However, those who saw the Lebanese Armed Forces as being an instrument of the [Lebanese] Phalange [Party] saw this as the U.S. opting in favor of the Phalange, and therein lay the difficulty. That’s when the problem began. The first you saw of this, of course, was the bombing of the [U.S.] embassy.

Now, even . . . now let me back off. Even before the bombing of the embassy, we had, in March of 1983 . . .

Frank: Five Marines wounded by a grenade.

Trainor: Yes. I had been up in Norway to observe one of the winter operations up there [with] [Lieutenant General] John [H.] Miller, who was CG [commanding general], FMFLant [Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic], at the time—and it was his plane. After Norway we flew on down to Italy and then on over to Lebanon. We were observing the Marines training the LAF at the very time that this roving patrol, which was unarmed in the sense that they had arms but there were never any magazines in the [guns], had this hand grenade thrown at them. I remember going up to Tannous that afternoon and Tannous saying, you know, that this was a wild man, a radical, and they got him; they got somebody who had seen him. Concurrent with that was an attack on the French and a presumed attack on the Italians although the attack on the Italians was in fact a friendly on friendly—it was an error.

The Italians never were hit, and this particular instance was not a hit against the Italians. It was a hit against the French and a hit against the Americans. I remember being back at Colonel [James “Jim” M.] Mead’s headquarters which was in the Lebanese counterpart of what we would call the Federal Aviation Administration [FAA] building by the Beirut airport, and the guy that function[ed] for the Lebanese civil aviation telling me that afternoon, “You’ve got to convince Colonel Mead to tell his troops to put ammunition in their weapons because you’re a sitting duck,



and you are targets.” We said, “No, no, we’re not here to fight anyone. We’re here to be simply a presence, to allow people to get their act together out here.” He said, “You are wrong; you are in danger; you should do this.”

Well, how right he was. He saw the situation. Well, then the people started to turn hostile towards us. Pictures of [Ayatollah Ruhollah] Khomeini started to go up in the area. Those that were on the scene have more explicit accounts of this sort of thing, but this was the sort of fact that we were getting. There were a lot of young men coming back into these various neighborhoods. Remember, just adjacent to the Marine position were all these refugee camps, which were made up primarily of Shiites, who had sworn an oath of allegiance to the Ayatollah Khomeini. New faces were appearing that were not familiar to the people within the region and the good relationships that the Marines initially had with the locals, particularly when the Marines were standing up to the Israelis, started deteriorating and eventually started to turn hostile. This then led us back to the situation [of] what is the mission out there and what are the rules of engagement?

The mission was never really defined. It always remained as a “presence” mission. Well, this is difficult for military people, you know; you always like to have a military mission with specific tasks. But we were able to live with uncertainty, and the way things were defined was more in the rules of engagement than in any mission statement. We were constantly revising the CinCEur [commander in chief, U.S. European Command], who was the theater commander, as to what the rules of engagement were.

Frank: It brings to mind a question about the chain of command, which was an awfully long chain of command, and also a question—and there were a number of visitors, when you were out there, and [the 27th Commandant General Robert H.] Bob Barrow made a trip out there as things were getting bad off, and [the 28th Commandant General Paul X.] “P. X.” Kelley made a trip out there, and [Major General Alfred M.] “Al” Gray [Jr.], made a trip out there, and even though [Army General and Supreme Allied Commander for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Bernard W. “Bernie”] Rogers didn’t come down, people from CinCEur came down—why didn’t someone go up to [Colonel] Tom Stokes or to [Colonel] Jim Mead or to [Colonel Timothy J.] “Tim” Geraghty and say, “Look . . .” and apparently there was a feeling on the part of CinCEur, as I’ve heard, that it was a Marine show and they didn’t want to . . . that this interservice business . . . they didn’t want to seem to be stepping on the Marines’ toes . . . but someone tell them, “Hey Jim,” or “Tom, things look hot. I think maybe you ought to put in an amtrac [amphibious tractor] up here on the road or you ought to put a tank up there. . . .”

Trainer: Well, people tend to be careful telling the tactical commander how to do his job. The tactical dispositions were reasonable. I went around and I looked at them, and they were prudent tactical positions, and they had a

pretty good system. As you know the position was to be occupied during the day when they could be seen. When dusk fell, they moved so that they couldn't be a target.

But with regard to the command relations, CinCEur was the guy responsible. He was the theater commander and he had his component commander in the Sixth Fleet, which was the task force commander for this operation. The thing was still in an amphibious mode. The CATF [commander amphibious task force] was still in charge and whether that was reasonable or not, I suppose, is arguable, but we always wanted to give the illusion that this was a temporary thing. So it was, I suppose in a sense, a bureaucratic device and as long as the ground force commander, the landing force commander, and the CATF got along well, there was no problem. In fact, there was some minor friction on the part of the CATF, but in general the guy that was on the ground was able to call the shots. But you have to remember, also, the CinCEur saw this thing as basically a diplomatic mission, and he certainly deferred to [the] embassy and to the president's special envoy that was out there. So the Marines, in a sense, were instruments of diplomacy. CinCEur had his representative down, with that body at the embassy, so you could understand where he kind of stood off from this sort of thing. They were not a military mission; they were really on a diplomatic mission. He had his representative to talk directly to the ambassador, but basically it was the ambassador and the special envoy who [were] running the show, and the military voice was one just to ensure that that which was done was not ludicrous from a military standpoint. It was an anomaly to the normal sort of operation. In fact, General Rogers, as you have found, pretty much left himself out of the pattern and the deputy CinC and [Brigadier] General [Ernest T.] "Ernie" Cook [Jr.], who was out in the J-3 [operations] shop at the time, was really the players on the EuCom side and very useful. I want to tell you, I talked with Ernie Cook just about every day and we would talk things over and he would influence the deputy CinC in making decisions which were favorable to the Marine Corps' interpretation of events down there.

Despite the vague mission we were not dissatisfied with the way the arrangements were employed. We were happy. What we were unhappy with was the fact that this thing was kind of open-ended, and in that sense we shared the same anxieties and misgivings as the secretary of defense. There was a question, "How about the [U.S.] Army taking over from the Marines?" We kicked that one around at Headquarters Marine Corps and thought that would be a splendid idea if the Army would do it, but the Army wouldn't touch it with a 10-foot pole. The secretary of defense asked the Army about going in there with garrison forces so that the Marines could go back and resume their normal function in the Sixth Fleet, and the Army just danced around that one and they said it would take six months to gear up, and really they did have some problems. We had the logistic base that was out to sea and the idea was to keep minimum

presence ashore and the Army couldn't have done that. They would have had to build up [a] big footprint. So the Army could have gone in there, as some people have charged they should have done, but that was not facing the reality of the situation. The feeling that the Army was better trained to do that sort of mission, that's pure baloney. The mission was presence and the Marines can fulfill any sort of a mission. Basically it was the fact that, from a logistics standpoint and a command and control standpoint, which the whole package of amphibious forces, it made sense to the Marines to remain there.

Of course we wanted to get out, but there was no way that we could see that we could get out, and the situation then was deteriorating. The Marines became an active target because they were viewed as siding with the Phalange government. (The earlier suspicion of collusion with the Israelis had been largely disposed of as a result of our confrontation with the IDF [Israeli Defense Force].) And, of course, you had the inter-confessional fighting as well as the fighting between the LAF and the confessional groups. The Marines were, in a sense, caught in the middle, taking it from all sides. People were shooting at Marines. We stopped the patrolling. We had long since modified the rules of engagement which now allowed the Marines to keep their magazines in their weapons and to return fire.

Frank: Proportional response.

Trainor: Proportional response. That too, was to change, as I will get to in a moment. We were, in a sense, beleaguered and you had difficulty identifying who was shooting at you. There was no question in my mind, although I don't have the evidence to prove it, but I think the LAF would occasionally crank off a few rounds at us also just to stir us up and to lead us into thinking that the Druze or some other confessional group was shooting at us.

Frank: That, of course—the point there is, it was a point that General Barrow made in his trip, he was out there on a farewell trip—and the thing that came out strongly in the Long Commission report was the lack of HUMINT [human source intelligence], which is a silly acronym, but the lack of intelligence of . . . [Lieutenant Colonel Donald] “Don” [F.] Anderson made that point. You know, you would get reports of what was going on in the Bekaa Valley, but he had no information of what was going on outside his wire.

Trainor: Yes, that's a good point. I'm glad you brought it up, yes. We had, probably, the best tactical intelligence that the Marine Corps had ever had. We established an all-source intelligence center, which was tied in very closely with the French, who also had a pretty good intelligence network. We had a special office; I'm getting into highly classified stuff here that's why . . .

Frank: Right. We ought to dance around it. We were getting stuff but what we needed we weren't getting.

Trainor: . . . tactical intelligence aimed not at terrorists. It was aimed at where the Israelis were, where the Syrians were, where the LAF were. It was oriented toward a different problem. It was oriented to the problem of the Shouf and the Bekaa Valley and the Syrians. It was tactical intelligence. On the terrorist side of the thing, we were still blind to the threat of the terrorist to the degree that we should not have been. Now, that's not to say we were not . . . that we were totally blind to it.

Frank: No.

Trainor: But we saw the danger of a terrorist attack as maybe the occasional shot at a Marine or an attempt to car bomb a convoy as they came out of greater Beirut and down to the Marine position or vice versa. That was the sort of threat that we had perceived and in fact guarded against. But, in terms of human intelligence to the enormous network of conspiracy that was in place and preparing to strike us, [we] were totally unaware of those dimensions. We considered it kind of a nickel-and-dime operation, the terrorist acts, and in this we made ourselves hostage to Tannous. Tannous became very popular with the Marines; he was very supportive of the Marines, and he was taking care of that aspect of things and would keep us informed and gave assurances of that—that he had his sources—and we believed him. But as it turned out, of course, he did not, or not to the degree that he ought to have.

Frank: We were prisoners of Tannous you said.

Trainor: In terms of the HUMINT within downtown Beirut.

Frank: Well, there was a perception I picked up in the command chronologies and in talking to, I guess Jim Mead perhaps, but one of the MAU commanders, that we weren't getting all we should from either the French—who must have had an intelligence network there in the Beirut area for years—or from the Lebanese; that they weren't coming across 100 percent.

Trainor: Well, you know, I can't answer that. We did have good relations with the French, and Tannous supposedly was giving us the information. The French were cooperating with us and we with them. What we were not receiving, I have no idea. If they had any better information . . . You know I sometimes wonder, because the French, when the bomb went off at the H&S [Headquarters and Service] Company billeting area, the French got hit at the same time, so if their intelligence was so good, why weren't they out of there?

Frank: Why weren't they . . . yes.

Trainor: So I'm not so sure that the French had much more than we had. But we were really, as near as I can gather, pretty dependent upon Tannous and the Lebanese sources for a lot of the HUMINT. We had no real HUMINT network for ourselves.

Frank: They also . . . the other comment that was made was when the embassy went up, that target perhaps was the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and the real intelligence experts for the Middle East and we lost a tremendous asset with the deaths of those people.

Trainor: Yes, when the bombing took place at the embassy, which was in April of '83, I went back over there as part of the contingent to return the bodies.

Frank: [Under Secretary of State Lawrence S.] Eagleberger came over.

Trainor: Eagleberger headed it and John [N.] McMahon, the deputy CIA [director], went out there. Now whether they were targeting the CIA guys or not was hard to say. But the office that was occupied by the CIA guys was right above the entranceway so they got it when the thing went. We did lose a tremendous amount of expertise when those people were killed. The station chief was killed and the guy who had recently come back as station chief was sent back out there again [William F. Buckley], and he's in the hands of the terrorists; he's one of the hostages that were taken out there a little later. I talked with McMahon, and I know him very well because we were classmates at Holy Cross; I don't think he viewed these as being [a] target. I think the target was the embassy itself, and they just got . . .

Frank: Anything American.

Trainor: Yes and they just got a "Bennie" by getting the station chief and some of the real experts in the area. The CIA was not giving us any information. We were not getting anything from the CIA to my knowledge.

Though the situation continued to deteriorate, we kept looking for ways of getting out of there, although I must say that there was not any real push. We were trying to be supportive of the president, but the JCS were uneasy. [The] secretary of defense was uneasy, and this all pretty much came to a head at the end of September when the fighting really became severe and the Israelis had withdrawn from the Shouf, and it became open season fighting between who was trying to occupy the Shouf. We had the Christians and the Druze fighting one another, and then the LAF trying to establish its sovereignty up there had elaborate plans of moving into the area. They had been trying to build up six LAF brigades so that they could extend their control and giving them all sorts of ammunition, all sorts of equipment out of Army stocks, which was making the Army squeak.

Frank: A lot has been made of when the LAF was getting it's a——s waxed up around Souk el Gharb. There were logistics flights from Larnaca, [Cyprus,] bringing in arty ammo [artillery ammunition]; those people just shot off ammunition like there was no tomorrow. It was at that point that the LAF requested naval gunfire support. A lot's been made about the argument that [National Security Advisor Robert C. "Bud"] McFarlane came in and directed it. Tannous asked for naval gunfire support from Geraghty. He said no, whereupon Tannous went to [Army Brigadier General] Carl Stiner who went around the other way, and then McFarlane came in and directed that Geraghty ask for the naval gunfire support—against his best judgment.

Trainor: Let me put the thing in perspective. The fighting was fierce up on the Souk el Gharb. Stiner, representing the chairman [of the JCS], was over there with his own communications directly back to the chairman. That was one of the anomalies now, when you talk about the command

arrangements. Everybody had representation on the scene which makes one question the command arrangements, which were established by the Unified Command, but that's not the subject. So the chairman was getting his word directly from Stiner. Stiner was a very nice guy, but he was one of these guys always heading for the foxhole and wants to fight—wants to go to war all the time. We had a situation wherein the LAF were reporting a very serious situation and they were about to collapse, and Souk el Gharb was going to go into the hands of the Druze and that would be the end of the Lebanese Armed Forces. We were put in the position of, "What do we do?" This was kicked around in the tank, ad nauseam. Clearly the feeling over in the National Security Council [NSC] and, it seems like, the State Department, was that "We've got to support the LAF," and "We've got to shoot," and so forth. Weinberger was opposed to it. The [Joint] Chiefs [of Staff] were unhappy with the thing. I remember P. X. [Kelley] had at all the meetings saying, "Look, the Druze had Souk el Gharb, before the Lebanese ever went up there, were, in effect, in potentially unfriendly hands, and if they wanted to damage the Marines, they could have." As a matter of fact, they were! They were shooting down into our positions, which was one of the reasons we had all those Marines in that building that was blown up because from the standpoint of artillery fire, that was the safest place to be.

Frank: Certainly was.

Trainor: It had withstood all sorts of hammering during the fight between the Israelis and the PLO and been hit and was very heavily constructed and it was like a big bunker. But Kelley's point was that the minute we start shooting back, in support of the LAF, as opposed to self-defense, which we had been doing, then the fat really is in the fire. And then the fact that we are in a tactically untenable position because of the political location (not a tactical location), then that becomes a burr under the saddle. So the chiefs were very, very reluctant on the thing. McFarlane, on the other hand, was strident in his request for support for the LAF.

Now, I'm going to relay an incident to you, which sounds ludicrous but it's true. It was a Saturday special meeting of the JCS and McFarlane got on Stiner's radio—he was out in Beirut at the time—and he wanted to talk to the chairman. [Army] Brigadier General George [A.] Joulwan, who was the assistant to the chairman, came into the meeting and told the chairman that McFarlane was on the radio. I was the OpsDep [operations deputy] at this point; I had gotten my third star and was the operations deputy. I was asked to go talk to McFarlane. So I went in and got on the radio to McFarlane. He was in Beirut; I'm sitting in the chairman's office talking on a radio. McFarlane is giving me the coordinates of the target that he wants hit. He wants approval for an air strike, [unintelligible] and artillery fire and naval gunfire. He was probably the highest priced FO [forward observer] in the history of the military in the United States, and I, equally, am probably the highest fire support coordinator. So I game him a "Wait! Out!" obviously and went back in,

and the chiefs were disinclined to do something like that. Obviously it was the call of the guy on the scene.

Now, Geraghty was opposed to firing for the same reasons that they tell me he was opposed [to] it, because if we started doing that, then they would really come under some fire. Now, it's amazing how the system works because we squared the circle. The JCS never came on board in terms of firing to support the LAF—never did. They compromised with the idea that the Marines would be able to fire in self-defense of their positions, if—and it didn't have to be an active threat—but if the situation was viewed as a threat to the Marines' positions down there, then you could fire; naval gunfire could be employed, air could be employed, artillery already was being employed.

Frank: Rules of engagement were thrown out?

Trainor: Well, no, it was an extension and an interpretation of the rules of engagement because the rules of engagement at that time allowed proportionate response to imminent threats.

Frank: To actual things. Now, this was a reasonable response to a perceived . . .

Trainor: That's right, if it was a threat. So that was the way the circle was squared to support the Marines' or rather the JCS' purity in not supporting the LAF but at the same time providing gunfire which would indirectly support the LAF. And the guy that manipulated that was the chairman. He was able to do it. He was a great manipulator. Vessey was a classic in terms of maneuvering the chiefs to support the position that he wanted and pretending to do something while not doing it.

Frank: McFarlane was an old Marine; he should have been sensitive to the situation.

Trainor: Well, I think McFarlane and company—the State Department as well as the NSC—had become absolutely committed that there was still the possibility of a sovereign nation state called Lebanon and that the way to achieve that was to support the legitimate Lebanese government via this instrument of unification in the armed forces. As I say, that was the basic premise. It was wrong at the outset; it remained wrong throughout. The LAF was not an instrument by which the nation state could be established. The Lebanese government was not a government. It was the same old chaos, but we blinded ourselves and pretended that we were on the road to some sort of a sovereign nation state via the instrumentality of multiconfessional armed forces. Well, this was pure hokum. We didn't know it at the time. We kept kidding ourselves, but I know there are a lot of people that were giving advice and counsel that were saying, "Wrong, that is not the case," but you believe what you want to believe.

So everyone at JCS was trying to be prudent about this whole thing. It was a very complex and difficult question, so you say to yourself, "Well, if you don't do that, what do you do? If you don't find some sort of means of shooting up there, maybe to help the LAF . . ." And by the way, the LAF were not in danger of collapsing, they were not, but it was just a momentary panic that they were about to collapse. But the feeling was if

the LAF was driven out of the Shouf or if the Marines were taken offshore, which was what the secretary of defense wanted done with them, that the Lebanese government would, in fact, collapse. So it was kind of a Hobson's choice at that time.

The Marines continued to fight and the Souk el Gharb thing did settle down. The Marines went to a philosophy of disproportionate response in order to discourage [inaudible]. That, in fact, worked.

Frank: Fire for effect.

Trainor: That's right. In other words, if they fired at you with a machine gun, you could fire back with a tank. That got their attention. I think the guys got a lot of good training. We got the sniper guys over there and they found out that the .50-cal [.50-caliber machine gun] sniper's rifle could go right through concrete. This was education. But, the point was that everybody was looking at that external threat. We were being shot at; we were defending ourselves from an untenable position and meanwhile, lurking behind us, was this terrorist threat which then came to culmination on the 23d of October.

The thing went off. I was asleep at home and remember the telephone ringing and being told that a bomb had gone off at the BLT headquarters—MAU headquarters was in the old FAA building—and that there were casualties. This was, I guess, about 0200. I acknowledged and asked, "Has the Commandant been informed?" "Yes, the Commandant, APMC [Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps], chief of staff." So I put my head back down on the pillow and then I thought to myself, "No, I think I'd better get up." I got up and I was in the shower and another phone call came in and said that it looked like there were substantial casualties. I said I was on my way in. "Bring in my team," from PP&O; colonels and lieutenant colonels and so forth. By the time I got to headquarters and into the command center, the information was coming in that the thing was pretty serious. I called and talked to the Commandant and told him it really looked like a humdinger. Talked to Ernie Cook and he had the same information. I can't recall whether we talked to Geraghty at that point or not. I think we talked to him later. I got the feeling that "The guy is up to his ears right now. Let's not bother him." Later on in the day, after the Commandant came in, then there was a conversation . . . the Commandant talked to the president, and the president said, "Well, I'll probably be asking you to go on out there," which in fact he did ask P. X. [Kelley] to do the following day.

Now, while all this was going on we were preparing to launch the Grenada invasion. So, to say things were somewhat busy would be an understatement. But, in due time, on Sunday, the extent of the catastrophe became known. In almost an insidious way it provided a marvelous cover for the Grenada operation, because everyone was focusing on Beirut and not on Grenada.

Frank: The first thoughts, I'm sure, at Headquarters [Marine Corps], were concern for Geraghty and the command and then, I'm sure, the questions



began; the major question, “What happened?”, “Were we delinquent in . . . were there things we should have done that we didn’t do?” And not a cover-your-a——s operation but a . . . you’re going to have to come up with some questions, with answers.

Trainor: Initially, that was not a concern. This had happened. Obviously you will say, “Well, why did it happen?” but we immediately looked at what the rules of engagement were and the initial sensing was, “Well, we did everything that could be done. We had people posted on duty; we had barricades up and the rules of engagement allowed them to fire and so forth.”

I was sent up to appear before the SASC [Senate Armed Services Committee] the following day, Monday. The SASC invited all members of the Senate who wanted to sit in on this interrogation to be present. To nobody’s surprise, the entire Senate showed up.

Frank: In executive session?

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: Closed session?

Trainor: Closed session, and it was Shultz and myself. They were questioning Shultz and me about what was the Marines’ mission, and they were questioning me—the Senators—about what are the rules of engagement, what was the security around the place. We knew what the security was, [unintelligible] and I had been out there and I knew the rules of engagement. I was giving information to the best of my knowledge and caveating things, “As far as I know, the guys had magazines in their weapons, they were authorized to fire,” etc., etc.

That turned out to be an error and we got badly lashed for that, and the reason was that it was an exception to the normal rules of engagement because of the amount of civilian traffic that was going in and out of the terminal which was just facing the gate that the vehicle came in; and for fear of an accidental discharge, the guys that were on duty did not have magazines in their weapon unless they were in a state of heightened alert, which they were not at that particular time.

The barrier that was supposed to be across the front of the gate was not there and it wasn’t much of a barrier anyway. All we knew was that there was a pipe there. We thought it was big. It was described as a sewer pipe. Well, you say to yourself, a sewer pipe; you would assume one of these big things and it’s going to be athwart the road. It wasn’t; it was a smaller pipe and it turned out it was parallel. It was a divider rather than a barrier.

Well, I didn’t know that, but when I was testifying I was perfectly sure that what happened was one of those things that was almost impossible to prevent. Well, we took a lot of hits because of my testimony at that particular time.

That was in the morning. In the afternoon, I appeared with Weinberger before a similar session by the House wherein practically the entire [U.S.] House of Representatives were present. There was great

outcry and indignation and so forth. So I got pretty badly cut up there and it made me very sensitive and when the Commandant came back from Beirut, later, to prepare him for the sort of thing that he was going to run into. I think what was happening on the part of the congressmen was a sense of frustration. There was nobody to strike back at. There was no apparent enemy. So you have to take the frustration out on something, so you take the frustration out on the nearest scapegoat that's around who happens to be the guy that was doing the job. I think that's an understandable sort of thing. But, initially, we had no concern as to whether the security was adequate. We just went under the presumption that it was adequate, particularly in view of the fact that all of the fighting had been going on out there. Everybody was alert and weapons loaded and locked and they had standby teams for the top of the buildings as well as the sectors and everything else. In fact it was all geared toward conventional ground attack or artillery attack and mortar attack . . .

Frank: Coming from the southeast.

Trainor: . . . and not a terrorist attack of the dimensions that took place. That was a degree of sophistication that we had not ascribed to the mom-and-pop operations that we thought the terrorist operations to be.

Frank: Up to—when I was out there the end of May and the beginning of June with the 22d [MAU], 24th relieved 22d [MAU]—up to that time the only incoming they may have had was a wild .50-caliber shot that went . . .

Trainor: This was 1983?

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: Oh, yes.

Frank: . . . that went through the PAO [public affairs office] tent and hit a tree—spent slug—and they made up a Purple Heart for the tree.

Trainor: Yes, yes, I remember that. Sure, there was . . . the tenor had changed at that point but we were not under a really serious threat. It wasn't until the summer time when the Israelis started to withdraw from the Shouf and we knew that there was going to be a problem up there; and after the . . . this was the May '83 Israel-Lebanese agreement which was universally condemned by the Lebanese confessional groups and by Syria. The whole thing had changed by May. By that time we were in an actively hostile situation and still, as a nation, refused to acknowledge that. We still viewed ourselves as peacekeepers and simply . . . not peacekeepers, but as people who were simply providing presence and stability to the region when clearly that had passed. But, you might recall that the [U.S.] Congress supported a resolution, the War Powers Resolution, in what, September? September, yes . . .

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: . . . of '83, giving the president authorization for 18 more months in the area. So the Congress was behind the president. It was just . . . all . . . in my judgment, there were enough experts around that knew the nature of the beast that was Lebanon, but their advice and counsel did not fit into the pattern of diplomacy that this administration wanted to pursue in view

of . . . not only in Lebanon, but as a subset of the larger Middle East peace settlement initiative President [Ronald W.] Reagan had undertaken. We were willing to take risks and to delude ourselves for that purpose and the whole thing came about.

Frank: Okay, now P. X. [Kelley] went out Monday with a team.

Trainor: He went out late that Monday to give assurances to the Lebanese, to assess the situation, and he was going out at presidential directive and he was not going as a member of the JCS. He was going, in a sense, as the presidential envoy.

Frank: And he came back . . .

Trainor: Well, let me tell you. The situation got so hot as information started to blow in that it gave the impression that the Marines were caught flatfooted. Outrage and indignation, in accordance with this sense of frustration that I've already expressed, started to explode here in Washington and also in repeated inquiries coming in from constituencies around the country to the congressmen. The climate that existed, which was one of horror but supportiveness—that existed at the time P. X. flew out there—had changed dramatically. When I came back from my scouring up on the [Capitol] Hill, I talked to the ACMC, who was [Lieutenant General John K.] "J. K." Davis, and to Headquarters chief of staff, [Lieutenant General] D'Wayne Gray, and I said, "Look, we have to get a message out to the boss to tell him to keep his mouth shut and not make any comment on this whole thing because of the climate back here." I wrote a "Personal For." If that thing had gone out right away it would have, perhaps, given P. X. poise in making the statements in response to the press.

Frank: Was the security . . . ?

Trainor: The security was adequate and appropriately satisfied. These were unacceptable terms I wrote in a very concise message that gave him a clear understanding of what was happening, and I have to tell you Ben, D'Wayne Gray fiddled around with the g——d d——n thing and delayed it from going out. I'd gone in and he looked at it and the ACMC . . . the ACMC was willing to send it out but Gray started to play with it and so forth, and it went out too late.

Frank: He (Kelley) had already made a statement.

Trainor: He'd made a statement effectively absolving the Marines. If my message had gone out when I wanted it to go out, it would have caught him before he made the statement, and perhaps he would have been cooler. But the fat was in the fire and he got the message from Garcia a little late.

He came home and we knew, boy, the press was waiting for him and the Congress was waiting for him. So then we sent a recommendation that he not get back early, because they were being informed. They wanted to see him up on the Hill. We recommended that he not get back until after dark on Friday night so that we could brief him up Friday night and Saturday and Sunday, because he was going to have to appear on the Hill on Monday. Now, I want you to know, that at this point the chairman of

the JCS, the secretary of defense, the CinC, nobody who was also involved in this thing—nobody in the chain—was standing up. The only guy that was getting any flak, the only guy that had said anything and was expected to say anything was P. X. Kelley. Even the White House and the State Department were unusually silent, so P. X. was taking the brunt of it.

Kelley got back on Friday evening and came directly to the Headquarters. He was tired, he was shaken—as we all were. We were literally in a state of shock; a state of shock from what happened, a state of shock that it could happen, and a state of shock to the reaction that was taking place in and around the country, the president, and up on the Hill.

Frank: Added to all this was the fact of the delay in identification of the casualties.

Trainor: That's right, yes. [Marine Corps] Manpower was going bonkers trying to sort that one out. A lot of the guys didn't have dog tags on, a lot of them were blown off, and there was criticism of that. The Israelis were very helpful in saying that they had offered their hospital facilities and we did not take advantage of them, and the Marine Corps was held responsible for that. It was rather bad.

Frank: Yes, what happened? They, within 20 minutes of the bombing, the Israelis came in and . . . who was the commodore at the time . . . ?

Trainor: Martin—no—I forget who it was. [Commodore Morgan M. France, USN]

Frank: . . . said they had already had, as a matter of fact, they had had a mass casualty evacuation exercise . . .

Trainor: Sure, we had a plan for mass evacuation.

Frank: . . . and had an agreement with the British. . . .

Trainor: Yes, and that was going into [the Greek island of] Crete and [Naval Air Station (NAS)] Sigonella [in Sicily, Italy,] and all up into various hospitals. I don't know. I suppose in retrospect, yes, whether . . . we should have taken advantage of their (Israeli) good offices, but I'm not so sure because we already had the procedures laid out and the flow laid on. There was a regular plan to do it. Even if there is something closer, logistically you start to deviate, you may be causing more problems trying to divert to some other facility than in going with the one that you did. Plus the fact that they were in Israel and the fact that you were going from Lebanon to Israel, that could have caused some problems also. So . . . but that was really not within the purview of the Marine Corps or even under the . . . well in a sense it was under the purview of the JCS, but the CinC plan for evacuation took place. I don't . . . there was nobody that died that I know of by following the basic plan.

But at any rate, getting back to P. X., he got there on Friday night and the chief of staff was there and the ACMC, myself, [Colonel John P.] "Phil" Monahan, [Brigadier General] Lloyd [W.] Smith [Jr.] from [Marine Corps] Intelligence . . .

Frank: [Colonel Matthew P.] "Matt" Caulfield?

Trainor: No, no, Matt was not there. That was it on Friday night. We . . . he came . . . as I said, the Commandant came in tired and shook and also very

belligerent because he had been getting a sensing that they were out to hang the Marines for lack of security and translated in his mind that meant Geraghty. We were trying to tell him that if he went up on the Hill and said that the security was adequate that they were just going to flay him alive. He had to finesse the thing. He was just adamant on the thing. So what I was trying to get across to him, having spent time up on the Hill being beaten about the head and shoulders . . . I told him, I said, “If you go up on the Hill and say that the security was adequate, they will consider you either a fool or a liar or both.” He didn’t like that at all. He was just . . . had his feet dug in and I said, “They are looking for somebody to hang. There has got to be a scapegoat on the thing.” I’d been up on the Hill. My title was Plans, Policies, and Operations for the Marine Corps. That equates in the minds of the congressmen as the guy who’s in charge of all this sort of stuff. I said, “I’ve already taken the hit. I’d be more than willing to retire, put my letter of retirement in, and they could say ‘Okay, the guy who was responsible for this screwup has been forced out.’ I am willing to.” He said, “I will not do that.” When he went away that night, I despaired. I said, “He is just hard over that he is going to a confrontation with all of these people.”

We agreed that we would have a meeting the next day and [Major General] Al Gray would come up from [Marine Corps Base (MCB)] Camp Lejeune, [North Carolina]. Al, later on, also made the offer to take the hit, which I thought was a legitimate thing to do. I still feel that one of us should have been the scapegoat . . .

Frank: . . . instead of Tim Geraghty and [Lieutenant Colonel Howard L.] “Larry” Gerlach, or instead of the Commandant?

Trainor: Yes, yes . . . that there had to be a scapegoat and to say that there wasn’t a scapegoat, you know just . . .

Frank: They wanted someone. They wanted someone . . .

Trainor: . . . said the Marine Corps would be the scapegoat and indirectly on the Commandant, which was the way, in fact, it turned out. But I think a lot of the heat would have been taken out of the whole thing if one of us generals, either myself or John Miller or Al Gray had gone and held up their hands—“I’m the culprit.” I think that would have saved an awful lot, but that was not to be. The next day the Commandant came in and he had settled down and thought about the thing and was far more rational about it. So then we said, “Okay, now, we’ve got to kind of put this whole thing in context for your testimony on Monday and the statement on the event.”

Frank: He had written—according to [Lieutenant Colonel] Frank Libutti [senior Marine aide to the Commandant]—on the plane back he’d sat by himself and had written his statement down on a yellow tablet.

Trainor: Yes, right, which was disastrous.

Frank: Okay, that was . . . you deep-sixed that.

Trainor: Yes, I suppose he still has that but this was . . . although he used part of it. But what we started to do then was put together . . . he started to come

around to the realization that he just could not go up there [and] couldn't back off the statement he'd made . . .

Frank: No, he had to explain it.

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: Which he did.

Trainor: The argument that I made, and that others made at the table in his office, was "Look, what we need is time. We have to provide time because everybody's passions are aroused and we have to slow down. Then we can cool the thing down, and one of the ways you buy time is to conduct an investigation and then you can finesse a lot of stuff." So he bought that, and of course he talked to the secretary of defense who said that—who would yes, in fact, order an investigation and it would be shown that it would be at the request of the Commandant of the Marine Corps—that the Commandant was requesting that the secretary have an investigation. In fact, that was done and that's what the Long Commission was. So it did buy us some time.

Frank: SecDef [the secretary of defense] was being supportive?

Trainor: Oh, yes. SecDef was supporting us, yes.

Frank: What about the White House? Where was the White House all this time? Quiet?

Trainor: Well, the White House remained fairly quiet but the president, ultimately, stood foursquare and said, "I take responsibility for the thing." But at this point the White House was being relatively quiet.

We went to work writing his statement and got Matt Caulfield over from the White House, because he had a sensing from over there. Everybody was pitching in on various sections of this thing. I'll tell you, we worked all weekend long and I was in on the final draft, making pen changes as the Commandant, on Monday morning, left from his office and I was still wordsmithing the thing and handed it to him. It was not a smooth typewritten paper. It was typewritten, but it had all sorts of hen scratches all over it, and then he continued the hen scratching on his way over to the Hill and then made his statement.

I think the point I want to get across is that his was confrontational when he came back. He was willing to stand by the field commanders having done the right sort of thing. We had trouble getting across to him, and he took umbrage at the fact that he, P. X. Kelley, was being attacked, and he was being vigorously attacked in the newspapers, as you know. So he was taking personal umbrage at being personally attacked, and he was taking umbrage at one of his subordinates being attacked. The point that we had to get across to him, and it took all Saturday to do it, was that, the institution and of the office of the Commandant is bigger than P. X. Kelley or anybody else within it. It had to be protected, and "If it is protected it requires a scapegoat. It's not going to be a colonel," couldn't be Geraghty. That was a nonstarter. Of course that was the farthest thing from his mind, but the idea of Geraghty, the poor son of a b——h on the spot who had so many bosses that he couldn't see straight . . .

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: . . . he was not going to be the scapegoat. They wanted a general officer or the secretary of defense or the president or something like that.

Frank: It started getting political, I think.

Trainor: Oh, yes. Well, it was political but it was also actual frustration and then there was the . . . remember we had the Iranian hostage crisis and “Who was responsible for this failure?” Nobody was punished. The people are saying, “My God, we can’t do anything right and nobody gets punished. All these generals get fat and sassy.” So I still, to this day, think the idea of offering up a senior, a three-star general officer—myself, Lieutenant General Miller, or Al Gray—would have helped the situation immeasurably. I don’t think the Marine Corps has fully recovered from this thing yet. P. X.’s position from all this had not recovered.

Frank: I don’t think so. Well, now, he, in closed session at the House, kind of mouthed off at a friendly congressman, which kind of put him in a bad—from Kentucky . . .

Trainor: I forget who was . . . I’d have to go back over the notes, but yes, he was stretched a little thin and he snapped back, and I think that was worked out later on.

Frank: But now, talking politics, up to that time, and since that time, he’s supposedly had good relations with the president and he was considered “palpable” to become the first [Marine Corps] chairman of the JCS. Do you think this was sunk for all times’ sake or was it realistic to think that a Marine general officer could ever become chairman of the JCS?

Trainor: Well, I think that would be speculation, but in terms of his standing with the president, I don’t think that was diminished one bit; I think it was enhanced. Remember, it was Kelley that was the lightning rod; he took all the hits. As I used to tell him on a number of occasions, I said, “You’re into them, for one. You’re into the White House, you’re into the secretary of defense, and you’re into the chairman of the JCS, and you’re into [Army General] Bernie Rogers. You were the guy that became the focus, even though technically, you didn’t have any responsibility. But you stood up and assumed the responsibility as one would expect of a Marine, regardless of who’s commanding the MAU.” There was no question that they respected him, and I don’t think this has hurt him with the president at all. I think it enhanced him. So I don’t think from that standpoint, that the president said, “Oh, we can’t have Kelley as the chairman.”

He was voiced about as being a potential for the chairman’s job. He, himself, said that he was not interested in it. Whether this was true or no, I don’t know that [he] was not interested in it. He wanted to be the Commandant of the Marine Corps and fulfill his role as a member of the JCS without being the chairman. Whether there was a move afoot, you know there were those that didn’t want to see him be the chairman. I do think that, in terms of making him the chairman, he had probably lost a lot of Congressional support. He was personally very hurt by the thing. There

was no question that he was bruised personally by it—by the attack on him.

Frank: Well, I just checked again; it was the greatest loss of Marine lives at one time, in one day, since D-Day on Iwo Jima, [Japan]. D-Day on Iwo, we lost 501 KIA [killed in action] and this was the greatest loss of life in one day. So that has to be a traumatic thing for Marine present and past.

Trainor: To all of us. It was a shot to the solar plexus of the Marine Corps. It was doubly a shock to the Commandant because of the personal attacks from it, to which he was very sensitive.

Frank: Especially since he had been getting such good press all along up to this . . .

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: We were talking . . . you were giving me some background which I indicated ought to be on the tape, Mick, and as I indicated will be handled sensitively and will not be made available immediately for some time . . . years perhaps.

Trainor: Yes. It's an interpretation on my part. How valid it is I don't know. I don't know if anyone would ever know. But P. X. was stunned by the events in Beirut on the 23d of October to the [inaudible] portion to what one would expect. He was . . .

Frank: Even given his personality?

Trainor: Well, given his personality, perhaps not, but it was a blow to the solar plexus of the Marine Corps. We all felt it, we all went into shock over the loss; how could this happen. Was there something that we should have done that we didn't do? There was kind of a minor crisis of confidence within the Marine Corps for a short period of time. Clearly there was the shock of the loss of so many.

Frank: I've heard, I [and] some senior officers I've gone to lunch with, including one here and another retired three star and so on, and we were talking about it based on their experiences in Vietnam. They couldn't believe that I would stick up for Tim Geraghty for the situation. I said, "You really can't answer, you can't react to it unless you knew what the atmosphere and the mind set was." The mind set was that we were giving presence and by putting these people in the BLT building you were really securing them; you're making them safe, because the way things were going, if they lived out in the tents they were fish in a barrel.

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: And if . . . but if they dug in they would develop a Maginot [Line] complex and you weren't fulfilling the mission of presence. And so the criticism—you know, the criticism—they made that based on the experiences in Vietnam with the sappers and all this other stuff should have prevailed here, and I said, "It's not the same thing."

Trainor: Well, I will partially agree with you but not totally. For one thing, we were dug in; dug in against a ground threat, an artillery threat around the perimeter. However, in terms of building ourselves a fortress, no, I think the feeling was that if we did that. The presence that we were supposed to show would not be seen. But I'll also tell you, Ben, that may also be a



certain amount of Marine rationalization. Marines just don't dig in very well.

Frank: They've always been accused of that, in Vietnam.

Trainor: Yes, and I saw some of the positions out there. I think they were tactically well sited but in terms of being well constructed, no. They were held together with comm [communications] wire—not very professional. So I think maybe we do somewhat rationalize the fact that it was a presence mission and therefore you couldn't dig in as much there. I went and looked at the security, and in my good judgment—and I think the fact stood out in the Long Commission report—the security, the way that fellow came in, was totally inadequate and that's why he came in that way. If he had tried to penetrate the perimeter, he would have been blown away. But he saw where the weak point was, and it was, in a sense, weak because it was facing the terminal where there was a lot of traffic—cars coming in and out every day—and it was somewhat of an anomaly for the situation. Most importantly, we never— None of the intelligence sources had produced any indication that there was a terrorist body that had the sophisticated capability of pulling off something like that—not only pulling that off but pulling a simultaneous one off against the French. So, it's a mixed bag. There's no simple answer to the thing. In hindsight I think you can clearly say, "Yes, we could and should have done more," but the results, though, in understanding, well, how much more? But was the security adequate even given the threat that existed? I don't think it was; I really don't.

Frank: But I got you off the track of what . . .

Trainor: Yes, getting back to the other thing. The event, as I say, was a blow to the Marine Corps as a whole, and in that sense also a blow to the Commandant. But I think the Commandant, also, was personally hurt—he's a sensitive individual—I think he was personally hurt to a great degree by the criticism that he came in for personally. He was being excoriated in the press and he needed to be someone with thick skin and just shrug it off and march on, but he was not one of those. He was personally hurt as well as being hurt in the role of his office and in the role of being a Marine.

Frank: Considering he's had a charmed life, from the time he was a captain, I guess you could say.

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: Good assignments, strong supporters . . .

Trainor: Yes, and he had great political acuity and he's an outgoing guy, and I'm sure that he had a broad base of friends and supporters and also was a bright and talented professional that did a good job. He was brave and courageous and . . .

Frank: Grown in each succeeding, each responsibly . . .

Trainor: That's right.

Frank: . . . succeeding job.

Trainor: I think he was—and this is a personal judgment—I think he was very sensitive to the fact that he was the first in the new mold of Commandant. [Tape interruption] . . . of the tradition within the Marine Corps that its leadership has, generally speaking, come from the southern aristocracy, which had been true in the past—I think until recent years. Obviously [General David M.] Shoup certainly didn't fit that mold, but then again, he had come off as being a renegade when he spoke out against getting involved in Vietnam, and he became a pariah. I think Kelley was somewhat sensitive to the rumors that were around—that Kelley and his "Irish Mafia" had taken over the Marine Corps. There was that sort of thing and I guess I was included as part of the "Irish Mafia." There was a feeling that the Irish Catholics from the northeast had taken over the Marine Corps. Well, Kelley wasn't Catholic to begin with and [Lieutenant General William R. "Bill"] Maloney wasn't a Catholic, but I think there was that sort of . . .

Frank: Oh, Bill isn't?

Trainor: No, Bill is not. But there was that sort of perception. I don't think it was particularly important, but I think he was sensitive to the feeling that he was of a different type. Now he succeeded two very powerful Commandants, [General Louis H. "Lou"] Wilson [Jr.] and [General Robert H. "Bob"] Barrow.

Frank: Each of whom had their own crisis.

Trainor: Each of them had their own crisis early on in their administration, the same as Kelley had his with Beirut. Wilson had the crisis in the manpower side, where we had gone for numbers under [Commandant General Robert E.] Cushman [Jr.] and the quality began . . . and we were pretending that we didn't have race problems, and we were pretending that we didn't have court-martial problems and criminal problems in the Marine Corps, and we were being eaten alive by that cannibal. When Wilson took over, he came aboard and had that problem to solve and it was a problem that was coming under great criticism by the press and by the Congress about, "What's happened to our Marine Corps?" He was able to handle this thing and handle it well, and solve the problem and therefore had a very effective period of the commandancy.

When Barrow came in, he had the problem of abuse in recruit training early on in his command, and he stepped into the breach and handled that one very, very quickly and effectively. You know we had the recruit killed out in [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] San Diego, [California,] and we had another recruit shot by his own instructor down in Parris Island [in South Carolina], and the Marine Corps was in mortal danger of being done away with because the Congress and the press and the public had forgotten that the [Matthew] McKeon incident and Ribbon Creek had taken place in 1956. It was as though it happened six months earlier. "The Marine Corps is inhuman and should be under our oversight. Why don't we give it to the Army." Whatever and we were really in mortal danger,

and he was fighting for the Marine Corps' life. So he had his crisis and he won it.

So both those two very strong Commandants had faced the challenge early on and succeeded. Now it was Kelley's turn and the thing really didn't seem to be handled too well because of the continued criticism that he received and, in effect, receives to this day. I think this hurt him personally, and I think in his mind, in the back of his mind, he was saying, "I know what they'll be saying out there, 'Well, we gave it to the Irishman from the northeast and what did you expect? He can't handle it.'" I think that had an effect upon him. That's just a personal opinion of mine and I don't have any substantiation of that. But you know, you get the . . . [Cross talk]

Frank: . . . that's right. But there's another aspect to it. The . . . we have a congressional Marines organization up there and we still have some pretty strong supporters, not as strong as it once was, but none of the services had it because you take a look at the complexion of the Congress and there aren't very many veterans. There aren't very many Vietnam veterans. As a result, the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs are getting short shrift. These are not the important things any more. There was a time, someone said, where the HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare] budget was going to be bigger than the defense budget and I think, by and large, it may have.

Trainor: I think, yes, I think it was.

Frank: Yes, and so this is another aspect. Now, the Marine Corps still has some powerful friends, but maybe not as powerful as . . .

Trainor: Oh, I wouldn't attribute that to anything that Kelley did or failed to do.

Frank: No?

Trainor: No, I think that's from kind of a natural phenomenon tied into the thing that you had mentioned, the fact that you don't have that many veterans anymore up on the Hill. No, I think his stature remains high. I think he's got a lot of friends. But I think he still is associated with what happened in Beirut. People will forget the details and they will forget the circumstances . . .

Frank: But it happened on his watch.

Trainor: . . . they will forget the Long Report, but it happened on his watch. And he knew that, that's why he never pretended to hide behind the fact that he was not in the chain. That was mentioned; I mentioned it when I was up on the Hill and—I'm not so sure that he ever mentioned it—but it was mentioned, not in defense of the Commandant but in terms of explanation. People would say, and as a matter of fact the [Jeffrey] Record and [William S. "Bill"] Lind article that appeared in *The Washington Post* . . .

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: . . . implied that Kelley was hiding behind that, which was utter nonsense. Kelley stood up to the responsibilities that he felt as the senior Marine and also as the principal military advisor to the president and the members of the JCS and as the guy who organized, trained, and equipped people to go out to do the job. He felt a responsibility. While he didn't have a technical

responsibility from the point of view of a Philadelphia lawyer, he assumed, and rightfully so, the responsibility as the presiding Marine. If he had ever tried to hide behind “Hey man, I’m not in the chain; I didn’t have any responsibility for that,” he would have not only destroyed his credibility, in my judgment, before the public at large, but within the Marine Corps.

Frank: Oh yes. Where I think he had strong support.

Trainor: Within the Marine Corps?

Frank: Within the Marine Corps.

Trainor: Yes, I think so. He comes across well and we’ve got good quality Marines out there today, good quality officers and I am removed—not only because I am retired—but I am removed when I was on active duty . . .

Frank: From the field.

Trainor: . . . from the field. I don’t know what they’re saying out in the field. I don’t know what the majors and captains are saying about all this stuff, I really don’t. I know what I’m told they are saying, and that’s all favorable. But where the criticisms are, if there are any that are substantial, that are the ground swell, I don’t know. Barrow and Wilson were viewed magnificently by the field. I think Barrow was also. There was kind of a ground swell which was prompted in large measure by some of the civilian experts like Bill Lind and so forth, that he was a dinosaur and he was a World War II type. But it was under Barrow that we were starting all the major improvements and changes. The argument’s been made that, “Barrow didn’t do those things. He simply allowed them to occur.” Well, yes, alright, that may be so, but if he was a reactionary, they never would have occurred.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: So maybe he didn’t inspire them but he was another function, and staffers, like me, who are supposed to come up with the recommendations and the programs. The Commandant should sit at the top and either give it tacit support or kill the thing.

Frank: I think one area of criticism about P. X. is the fact that he’s tied himself too closely to the president. I think the president . . . it’s the other way around. The president has grabbed P. X. to his bosom; you know, “my Marines,” and he gets off the helicopter and he salutes the Marine there and he’s waving to the crowd and he’s a military man who appreciates it. I think this had sort of a reverse whiplash.

Trainor: Yes, I don’t think that has anything to do with Kelley. I think it’s because Ronald Reagan, for all practical purposes, was never really in the service.

Frank: That’s true.

Trainor: But he is a man who admires honor and integrity and the Spartan ethic and sacrifice. When he looks around at the Services, the Services which he admires for what they did, I think he focuses in on the Service that, in the public’s eye, long before he was in politics, always represented the epitome of military professionalism, élan, and dedication; and that’s the Marines. So I think it’s transference of an attitude that he has toward men

who symbolize that particular organization; that happens to be P. X. Kelley. He had the same sort of thing toward Bob Barrow. So I don't think that it's necessarily P. X. Kelley, although I think he likes him as a person and P. X. is very affectionate . . .

Frank: Very personable, sure.

Trainor: And in the meetings with the president, of which there have been certainly far more under Reagan than under [James E.] "Jimmy" Carter [Jr.], he sees Kelley. Kelley's got a good sense of humor; the president has a good sense of humor. Kelley takes a practical and pragmatic approach; the president does also. Kelley symbolizes . . . looks good, he looks like a military man. The other chiefs, and this is nothing against them, really don't look like military men. Kelley looks the part.

Frank: Sharp, fresh . . .

Trainor: I think that it is important for a Marine Commandant to look the role . . .

Frank: Oh, yes.

Trainor: . . . of a Marine, because a lot of our strength comes from the perception that people have that the Marines are really great fighters. So I think Kelley summarizes this entire sort of thing and the president likes that; and he constantly . . . he comes to a meeting with the chiefs and he's wearing a Marine Corps tie tack. Now, you know, from a standpoint, from the chiefs standpoint, you know, you don't object, but. . .

Frank: I think also these other Marines like Shultz and McFarlane . . .

Trainor: Yes, yes, so there's kind of a view of the Marine "mafia," and so, yes, there is a certain reverse psychology that there is a Marine mafia around. I don't know how serious that sort of thing is. I think that's just kind of . . .

Frank: They're a lot more pragmatic than that.

Trainor: Yes, I think that's . . .

Frank: Let me ask you a question out of the blue. Who's going to succeed P. X.? Who do you see amongst the general officers?

Trainor: I don't know. The selection of a Commandant is a custom made and stricken each time. There are a lot of players involved in it; the Commandant has to be a player but not the only player and not necessarily the most important one. The secretary of the Navy has to be a very large player, particularly this secretary. The secretary of defense is a player and the White House. One doesn't know what powers will accrue to Reagan, the chief of staff, and the influence on the president. The president, because he has taken such an active interest in the military, knows a lot of the players. So it's hard to say who it's going to be. If P. X. Kelley were, which he will not, of course, [to] say, "My candidate is . . ." that doesn't mean that's going to be the fellow.

Frank: Used to be at one time though.

Trainor: Well, I'm not so sure of all that. I just think the amalgam . . . as I say, the Commandant is custom made. It's different each time a new Commandant is in the making because the players and the influence of the players change from four years to four years. So I wouldn't even . . .

Frank: I can't see anyone. If I were going to say someone who's standing head and shoulders above, who's more prominent, I'd say Al Gray, but . . .

Trainor: Well, I'll give you a profile of what I think a Commandant should be.

Frank: All right.

Trainor: The Commandant, first and foremost, has to look like a Marine and act like a Marine. His appearance is very important to perception and the public's perception and the congressional perception is that Marines, as I mentioned earlier, are bright people who are honest; they breed integrity and breed courage and look the part and have a good combat record. That's the ideal image. He doesn't have to be the brightest guy in the world . . .

Frank: No, we've experienced that.

Trainor: You can always surround yourself with bright guys, but if you get a Commandant who doesn't fit the popular perception as the leading Marine, and I don't care how bright he is, he is not going to be as effective. Now, looking over the past, General [Wallace M.] Greene [Jr.], you know, was a tremendously bright sort of guy, but he did not look like a Marine; and I think that some of his influence was somewhat diminished by that. I have nothing to back that up, but it's just a sensing of how this Marine Corps worked for so many years and how it works in this town, and perceptions. Kelley became Commandant and he had a full credit line available to him, simply because Kelley looked like a Marine.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: And how he spends those credits is another matter. But the point is, he looked like a Marine and the guy that replaces him should look like a Marine. You know, you also have the sequence. Kelley looked like a Marine; Barrow had that Louisiana patrician appearance, and Lou Wilson with his savvy and his appearance and that Congressional Medal of Honor, so who are you going to follow? For the Marine Corps' purposes, it should be somebody who matches that sort of image. Do we have one around? I'm not so sure we do. Does Kelley want somebody like that or does he want to be remembered as the last of the really great Marine Commandants for a number of years to come? I don't know.

Frank: We were going to talk about Grenada too, or do you want to save that for another session?

Trainor: Save that for another day.

Frank: All right. Okay, we'll save that for the next one.

Trainor: All right.  
[Interruption in tape]

Frank: We misspoke, as I turned it off, and we have time and we can talk about Grenada. How long had it been kicking around?

Trainor: That was a very fast operation. We're talking about weeks.

Frank: Really?

Trainor: Yes. Of course the [Maurice R.] Bishop government in Grenada had been kind of a target for a long time, and the CTF-140 [Combined Task Force 140] at [Naval Air Station (NAS)] Key West, [Florida,] which was the

joint task force, which was established by Carter in response to the so-called Soviet Brigade in Cuba and this was his response. It was kind of a headquarters without a patron or without a mission so it made one for itself, and it did, in fact, have contingency plans for the various islands, and had an eye on [the island of] Grenada [in the Caribbean Sea] and really did have plans to do the job on Grenada. The anomaly of the whole thing is when the time came, they never did use CTF-140, never did use the plan that they had. A lot of the criticism that existed with regard to communications, lack of communications, would have been solved had they used the CTF-140 plans.

They had all the . . . they had a response team for the whole operation, which involved airborne and amphibious forces. Why CTF-140 was not employed in this thing I don't know for sure. There was not much discussion of it in the JCS to my recollection. I conclude that it . . . basically because of ComSec [communications security] and the fact that the operation promised to grow like Topsy. Initially it was to be a NEO. The situation had turned sour down there. I won't go into the details of it unless you want me to.

Frank: No, because I think we know the concern about a second Iranian hostage situation.

Trainor: Yes. We had the students down there and you had a country that was starting to fall apart, and it was under Marxist leadership, friendly to Cuba and the Soviet Union; but that wasn't, initially, the concern. The concern was that there was a certain degree of anarchy starting to develop down there, and the concern then was that we'd better get the American students that were at the medical school down there. So the . . . when . . .

Frank: Was Grenada considered to have strategic value?

Trainor: No, not particularly.

Frank: It didn't have—even with the building of this airport?

Trainor: There was a concern of the airport and there was concern also that [inaudible] down in Guyana [in South America] was falling into the Cuban net and then what you would find was kind of a string of Cuban-Soviet outposts along the Bermuda chain. So yes, in that sense there was some sort of concern, but it was not an overriding sort of thing, in the same sense of, say, Nicaragua. When the situation started to deteriorate down there and ultimately Bishop was assassinated, the feeling was "We've got to get the students out of there." The initial thinking was "We'll get a contract airplane and fly them in and permissively fly them out" and anybody else that wanted to come out of there. As the situation changed then the idea was, "Well, instead of getting contract airplanes, we'll just have a regular NEO and take them out by helicopters from amphibious ships." Then the situation . . . that would be permissive. Then the question was "Is it going to be permissive? Maybe we're going to have to go in there to ensure the security to take them out." Then, ultimately, "We'd better go in there and neutralize the people and take them out,"

which, in effect, was overthrowing the government. Now these were the steps that took place, and all this took place in the course of a week.

When the situation started to deteriorate, the first thing was, “Well, in addition to getting contract aircraft, where are the Marines?” The 22d MAU had embarked and was on its way to Lebanon to relieve the guys in Beirut. We also had the [USS] *Independence* [CV 62] underway. So, for security purposes, both of them were told to divert, to go south; and it was held perfectly quiet because there was no plan to do anything at that point other than, if necessary, to bring in contract aircraft to take people out with the permission of the local authorities. Unfortunately, this leaked to the press.

Frank: Oh, really?

Trainor: First it appeared in the newspapers and it appeared on television, which made everybody, then, enormously security conscious because we were afraid that there could be a hostage situation with the students or a bloodbath with the students, and their safety came first. That was the focus of attention, getting the students out and letting Grenada stew in its own juices. The week went on. The concerns were that it may not be permissive and that we could be resisted, and we would be resisted by the local Grenadian Army and perhaps by the small group of Cubans that were down there and the indications that the Cubans were starting to take a hand to establish control within the area under this fellow [Hudson] Austin. Bishop then was assassinated.

Frank: Of course, there was no hard intelligence going out of there because I think the CIA had pulled its—whatever agent they had down there—out, and . . .

Trainor: Yes, we had no . . .

Frank: Nobody knew what was going on.

Trainor: We had no intelligence. We were getting information from the people who had been over there sailing private boats and yachts who went over to Barbados; particularly a German couple that said, “Things are starting to fall apart over there. They could be going into a state of anarchy.” The British were getting a little bit concerned and they dispatched a ship to the waters. But we had very little intelligence. About the only one who knew anything about the island in any detail were the British officers on the SACLant [supreme allied commander, Atlantic] staff down in Norfolk, but their feeling was . . . we were getting bad vibrations from the British in doing anything other than a NEO. They would cooperate with us on a NEO, but if it was going to be nonpermissive NEO or anything beyond that, the British didn’t want any part of it.

There was concern starting to be expressed by the six Caribbean nations and the feeling that this place was going to turn into a Cuban bastion, exporting revolution to them. So there was a certain anxiety there. But intelligence-wise we weren’t getting an awful lot. Whenever you called and talked to the guy who was running the hostages, the medical school down there, he assured everybody, assured the government that



everything was fine; there was no problem, no trespassers. That's all he ever said to me. He was being given assurances by some of the local authorities not to worry. But we saw all the indications, particularly when the shooting started down there, that the situation could be rather dicey.

So the Marines were dispatched into position, and the *Independence* down there, and it then became a foregone conclusion that this would not be a permissive NEO. It would probably be a nonpermissive NEO and we might have to fight to do the job. Then it was rather interesting to see how that changed from being a permissive NEO to one of neutralizing the opposition. I remember sitting in the tank and the talk started to turn toward that—as to how could we neutralize and what would the rules of engagement [should] be. P. X. leaned across to me and said, as an aside, “I thought this was supposed to be a NEO operation.” Date-wise, we're talking here on the Wednesday, Wednesday afternoon.

Frank: This would have been the 18th.

Trainor: The 18th, yes, at a normal JCS meeting. There was a flurry back and forth between JCS and the White House and, of course, the secretary of defense. The decision was that we were going to have to go in, and in some strength. By Friday it was clearly going to be a case of neutralizing and there were indications that the militia was being mobilized and armed. The question was would they respond to Austin's authority or would they, in fact, oppose Austin, who was making a power seizure after having assassinated Bishop. Were there any prospects of a civil war down there? We had an indication that the Cubans sent a colonel down there, which in fact they did, and therefore, what role now were the Cubans going to take in this thing? Were they going to try to make Austin their man and take control of the situation?

Again, no intelligence. CIA was trying to get a guy in there. They were afraid of sending a radio in via diplomatic pouch to the British embassy for fear that the thing might be opened. There were all sorts of wild schemes; they were going to put some key agents in on the north side of the island by helicopter at night. The one we got . . . we did get somebody in there. It was a woman CIA agent got in there and she started to get some stuff out to us. I don't know the detail of how all that was done, but it confirmed the fact that it looked like we had to go in there to save the students and also to save the situation.

Very conveniently, I think—in my judgment—we saw an opportunity. Now, this was never openly talked at in the JCS, because the JCS focused primarily on the students. But I do believe, over in the White House, NSC, reflected by Vessey—who was over at all these meetings—the idea appeared that it was the opportunity to get rid of a problem in the Caribbean, particularly with that long airfield being there.

Frank: Point Salines [International] Airport.

Trainor: Yes. So, this lends credence to the Commandant's rhetorical question, “I thought we were talking about a NEO operation.” By Thursday the thing

had turned from being a NEO operation to being an operation [that] was going to take control of the island.

Now, OpSec [operational security] was of the greatest importance because of the threat to the students. Who was going to do the job? Well, you've got the Marines down there and you've got the carrier down there and it was CinCLant's [commander in chief U.S. Atlantic Command] area of operations so CinCLant should be the guys to do it. [U.S. Navy Admiral Wesley L.] "Wes" McDonald was CinCLant and he was asked to come up with some course of action, a recommended course of action on Friday. Initially his plan was making use exclusively of the Marines, but the chairman was rather interested in having more forces down there. I think he was interested in getting the Army involved and in getting JSOC [Joint Special Operations Command] and the Rangers involved in particular. I think he was using his J-3 that worked for him out in Korea, who was a guy by the name of Puller, who never really viewed himself as working for the joint organization but rather as an Army officer working for an Army officer. He was doing an awful lot of offline telephoning in the name of the chairman, presumably and the JCS, to alert forces; and talking directly to the forces to be alerted, the Rangers, JSOC, and the [Army's] 82d Airborne [Division], instead of trying to talk to McDonald.

McDonald came up on Friday to the JCS to lay out his course of action, which was pretty much a Marine sort of thing. Then he went back down and between Friday night and Saturday there was a flurry of telephone calls and he, then, was supposed to brief his plans via teleconferencing in the emergency action room there at the JCS on Saturday. This was where the thing starts to become a multiservice operation instead of basically a Marine operation.

There was great discussion of the thing. Wes McDonald did not cover himself with glory; in fact, he was a weak CinC. He bent under the pressure of the chairman, and they started to come up with plans that would give a piece of the action to everybody. Was a piece of the action necessary for everybody? No, in my judgment, it was not. The Marines could have done it with just the MAU or with the MAU plus a backup from the air alert unit up in Camp Lejeune. The chairman indicated that the president was concerned that we do this thing, and do it right, and more was better. Now the more that . . . more is better than enough. He translated that into Army units.

The plan that emerged was ludicrous.

Frank: I can imagine.

Trainor: The plan was to take the two airfields simultaneously, Pearls and . . .

Frank: Point Salines.

Trainor: . . . Salines; to be taken by the [Army] Rangers with JSOC going in to seize Richmond [Hill] Prison and Fort Luca[s] and the governor's house and to knock out the radio communications. So the Rangers and JSOC—this would all be done in the dark—would go in first. These would be essentially be

followed by the Marines, which would be followed by the . . . All at night, no rehearsal, the Marines had not even been briefed.

Frank: They were in the black; they were under EMCON [emissions control or radio silence].

Trainor: That's right. They had not been briefed, they had no maps, nothing resolved as to what they were to do over the standby for a NEO. . .

Frank: Insert. Something here that I learned when I was down there; they listened to the message. They listened to the message traffic, the radio traffic, and assumed that given the state of the situation in Grenada that there would be a NEO. Then it turned even harder. They still hadn't been given any direction but they knew they had to make some plans. They went to the charts and all they had were 1857 admiralty maps of Grenada onboard ship, which had been updated, but no grids or anything. So they depended on the intelligence of two people; the chief staff officer, [Navy] Commander [Richard A.] Butler, "Rick" Butler, who was a bright sailor man, who was a private sailor and sailed around it [the island], had been recently. So he knew, for instance, that the eastern beaches were not . . .

Trainor: Not very good.

Frank: . . . not very good, that they couldn't go over the beaches . . . on the eastern beaches . . .

Trainor: I don't have the details on that. I just know what happened here at Washington. But the point was that the Marines were in the dark and it wasn't until just the day before the landing that they got their mission and they got their maps, such as they were.

Frank: Such as . . .

Trainor: And the maps did not turn out to be good, although we were given assurances because the question was asked, "Do we have the maps?" And we were given assurances that, "We do have good maps," and that they were getting out to the forces that were to be involved, which it turned out was not the case.

But the thing was moving along and the guy that blew the whistle on this ludicrous plan was P. X. Kelley. He said, "For outfits that hadn't been trained to work together on this sort of thing, to not know anything about the target, had not rehearsed, and one outfit—the Marines—don't even know what they're going to do—they haven't even been cut in on the thing—to put something together like this is a prescription for disaster." Vessey showed his lack of understanding of the complexity of this type of operation by continuing to say, "Well, getting ashore is not the problem. The problem comes after we get ashore and what do we do?" He was functioning primarily in the political mode; what do we do militarily in the political sense and really paying relatively little attention to the fact that this was a very complex sort of operation.

Frank: Dangerous too.

Trainor: To him it was a simple thing—we would send the JSOC and the Rangers and the Marines in—and showed a total lack of understanding from my point of view. McDonald was not helpful. He said, "Well, I'm trying to

keep this thing simple because it is a dangerous operation. We have very little time to do it in, prepare for it, so let's keep it simple. I'd just as soon go with the Marines," but he [unintelligible] the chairman was constantly harassing him to get the other men on the operation. So Kelley was the one that said, "That's a prescription for disaster and I don't want any part of it. What I suggest we do is to keep it simple and let the Army land in the south and the Marines will land in the north. We'll take the northern part of the island and the Army can take the southern part of the island and St. George's and so forth."

Then we had the CNO [chief of naval operations]—oh, the Army was yelling for a . . . "There has to be an overall commander of this thing," and Kelley said, "There is, and he's called the CATF." He was holding school for them. He said, "What you're doing here we've done time and time again in our history; we have doctrine for it. In the Navy, it's called NWP-22, in the Marine Corps, it's LFM-01—the same document—and you're all trying to get up on that document and make it a joint doctrine. The CATF is in charge." [Army General John A.] Wickham [Jr.] kept insisting on an overall ground force commander and Kelley returned . . . well, he didn't say that there shouldn't be one, but he was implying that Wickham was focusing on the wrong part. It's the overall commander and the overall commander is the Navy commander. The JSOC was going to—and this is another reason Kelley wanted to get away from that—JSOC was going to be under the control of the guy in the air, in the [Lockheed] C-130 [Hercules], and they would not be under the control of the CATF, in other words. So it was decided; yes, they were going to split the island. Then the CNO came up and showed his ignorance and started to answer the problem of the unified command—"Perhaps we can have a coordinating committee!" I didn't . . . my notes say then, "This is like guys trying to write a scenario for a spaghetti western." It was really second-rate. I tell you, I was just . . .

Frank: Unbelievable!

Trainor: It was so poor; Vessey focusing on political motivation and focusing on getting the U.S. Army special operations types involved; CNO not knowing the first thing about how to conduct an operation like this having come from the submarine world; [Air Force General Charles A.] Gabriel being quiet, and silent as usual, and Kelley being the only one to have . . . introducing some sense, and Wickham not really understanding the issue either. It was really . . . and Wes McDonald acting like a "Yes sir. No sir," like an errand boy instead of a CinC who was [unintelligible]. So it's no wonder there were some problems.

It was very poorly done. If you had assigned a strong CinC, it would have been done well. But it was a weak CinC, and we were trying to work the issue offline, talking to John Miller down at FMFLant and to the guy that was the deputy over at CinCLant whose name escapes me right now—Filmore, Dan Filmore [?]; trying to bring some coherency into the action in terms of having had done this thing before—"Let's put this

together the way we should put it together.” But it got so involved with amateurs who didn’t know what they were doing; you had [Navy Vice Admiral Joseph] Metcalf [III] in there who, in a sense, was an amateur. He knew nothing about amphibious operations. So you had a bunch of amateurs putting this thing together. As it turned out, they tried to put the JSOC people in for early reconnaissance, and Christ, it was a disaster.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: And then the Cubans were getting wind of it and they were putting out obstacles on the airfield. This is when Kelley said, “If they’re so uncomfortable with the situation that they’re putting obstacles on that airstrip, I’m uncomfortable that they’re uncomfortable—which means that we’d better go in prepared to fight. We’ve got to do it right. The best way to do it right is you guys do your thing down in the south and . . .”

The Marine landing came off against relatively little opposition but on very short notice. We’re talking less than 24 hours from the time it was planned; in fact it was just the evening before that they were cut in on the thing and a team went out to them to brief them and to give them the maps they wanted—and of course the thing was carried off splendidly.

The Army landing in the south was a disaster! First of all, it was still from a scenario and by scenario; “Here’s what we’re going to do” without taking into account that maybe things weren’t going to work that way. It was too time sensitive and it was too complex for the thing to work properly under the circumstances—and it didn’t. The time lines were missed, some of the JSOC guys went in during daylight, and the Rangers had to come in during daylight. They had an inertial navigation loss on the plane that was leading them on down, so the thing was a mess. Well, you want to expect this sort of thing on an operation, but the thing was the guys that were putting this sort of thing together didn’t belong to the school that says, “The plans that you make are not the one you’re going to execute,” and they didn’t have that much flexibility. As a result, there were casualties that were unnecessary. The JSOC guys never really did carry out their mission, and they got themselves caught up there in the governor general’s house. The Army and the Marines and all were supposed to take the town of St. George[’s], and they [the Army] never got off the bloody airfield. Then we had a few Cubans down there that did not amount to a hill of beans, but they were armed and they were in concrete buildings and the Rangers weren’t armed with anything heavy enough, so it was easy enough to hold them off. So the end result was that the Marines had to be called down to . . .

Frank: No coordination between the Marines and the Army—no communication?

Trainor: No, there wasn’t. Of course, at that point there wasn’t a requirement for it. The Marines were pretty far north, and the point is, there was a line drawn across the island where they were supposed to meet. The meeting point was to be one of the hotels that they had over on the coast just to the south of St. George[’s] in the direction of the Salines airfield. The Marines made all of their checkpoints and there was no Army [force] there, no Army

there at all. The Army was stuck down on the airfield. I'm not being overly critical of the Army, but the thing just didn't come off well. Even when the 82d [Airborne] got there, they just did not move fast enough. When they finally made an assault in on Calivigny barracks, Calivigny barracks was empty. We knew it was empty from the overhead coverage. Hell, even the day of the landing the thing was empty. But somehow or another they were going to make that assault and it turned out to be a wretched thing. One helicopter ran into a [inaudible].

So then, of course, the Marines came around to guard the Marine helicopters. Okay, a commander's entitled to do that and it showed the Marines' ability to be flexible, even though I know there were some complaints on the part of Marines about it splitting up the air-ground team. So what? Here was an obvious need, and it made sense to me although it may not have made sense to some of the purists on the air-ground staff with [inaudible]. But to me it showed our ability and our flexibility, so I supported what had happened and still do.

The thing limped along and the Marines did their job superbly, no question about it. But the Army did the job but did not do it well.

Frank: The Marines should have done it well. This is the type of operation that they'd trained for. The MAU, type of thing they'd conduct in the Mediterranean.

Trainer: We could have done the thing, assuming we didn't have to take the two airports at the same time, which for some reason or another became . . . I don't know. It was never fully articulated in the discussions I attended why we had to seize both airfields at the same time, other than the fact that the Cubans had the ability to move about 1,000 troops in an airlift. But the likelihood of the Cubans being able to do that with the *Independence* north of Grenada with a full deck of aircraft, and we had flown 10 [McDonnell Douglas] F-15 [Eagles] down to Rosey Roads [Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico], and we were totally monitoring the Cuban situation, with plenty of advance warning if the Cubans tried to do anything. They couldn't have done anything. So therefore the need of closing down that airfield, unless it was to keep Austin or somebody from escaping, really wasn't apparent. But if the Marines . . .

The Marines could have gone in to Salines with the forces that they had and the action would have probably been six to eight hours in my judgment. One of the reasons that the thing dragged on so long with the Rangers is that they didn't have any heavy weapons. But the Marines would have faced the same thing if they didn't have heavy weapons either. The guys would have been giving up at [Fort] Frederick and at Richmond Hill Prison, places like that, down in Fort Rupert, but the fact is the Marines came in . . . Christ, they had tanks and all this other stuff. No local is going to stand up to something like that. All they had to do was lay the tank on him and he backed off. But the Army couldn't do that, so therefore they met the resistance. The Marines were smart; they were a well-trained outfit.

Frank: [Lieutenant Colonel] Ray [L.] Smith [BLT commander] had good people down there.

Trainor: That's right. And here, on practically no notice, they did the job. The Army had far more notice, far more intelligence than our guys had, and they didn't do the job; it's as simple as that. When the whole thing was over, needless to say, the fighting between the services began with the restriction, no reproduction; and the document could only be used at the discretion of the two generals to derive lessons learned for improving our own capabilities.

Frank: Yes, had we come out with something at that time the Army would have been damned by invidious comparison.

Trainor: That's right. It would not have served the nation well to have the sort of thing that we reflected in the subsequent building criticism and . . .

Frank: As a result, we've been criticized.

Trainor: Yes, as you know, everybody is painted with the same brush, obviously.

Frank: Well, the Army's . . . I've read the Army report written by—it's classified—by a very smart major and it's been pretty objective, I would say—very objective.

Trainor: Well, I'm glad to hear that because my concern was that the Army would kid itself into thinking that it did well in that operation.

Frank: No, no, not in this report.

Trainor: But it didn't do well.

Frank: Oh, no!

Trainor: For "X" number of reasons.

Frank: Well, hell, they had a firefight between their own units; they were doing reconnaissance by fire when they came up against Ray Smith's people near St. George[s] and wanted to know what they were doing there.

Trainor: Yes, yes.

Frank: [Army Major] General [H. Norman] Schwarzkopf aboard the [USS] *Guam* [LPH 9] was saying, "Well, can the Marines go down here?" The dividing line got further and further south . . .

Trainor: Well, it did, yes. The Marines took over more and more and the problem there was that the higher echelon, the command echelon, knew of this but the guys on the ground didn't know.

Frank: That's right.

Trainor: And the Army, of course, would use this for an example of why you need an overall ground commander. We never argued against that but the need really did not become very apparent there for a while, because the Marines had done everything and the Army was just sitting down there on that little spit of land.

Frank: Of course, as you're well aware, when the Army requested use of the helicopters, the Cobras, where we lost the two, they didn't even have the call signs. They were . . .

Trainor: It's unfortunate that the CTF-140 plan [inaudible] kind of a baseline. As I say, there was such concern for leaks . . .

Frank: Highly compartmentalized.

Trainer: Oh yes, no question. Let me tell you an example. On Saturday, General Wickham was really upset. He was getting these curious calls from his commanders because they were being cut out of the pattern, and the subordinate units that were going to be involved were being dealt with directly by [inaudible], and the commanders of these units were being cut out, the major commanders. Wickham was really upset about that because, Christ, he was a four-star general [inaudible] on the thing.

Another rub came when the execute order, which was given . . . it was signed out on Saturday, the chairman announced it at a meeting with a [inaudible] brief, but still not concrete, but it was given to SecDef as it was. SecDef left the meeting and then Vessey let it be known that the execute order had gone out and all of the chiefs really got upset about that because they had never seen the execute order. Vessey had released it.

Vessey was initiating everything and doing what he wanted to do. I'm not criticizing the guy; he was a master at doing this sort of thing. But he coordinated that whole operation to be what he wanted it to be, from becoming something more than a NEO to the business of neutralization. How much he was following White House desires I don't know, but clearly he manipulated it the way he wanted it. He got the Army involved and the Rangers and the JSOC and the 82d [Airborne]. He got the operation going basically the way he wanted it. By running that execute order, I'll tell you because the situation . . . we had not yet fully agreed on what was going to be done. The chiefs would have never signed out on the execute order. But he said he was directed—he got a little testy—and he said he was directed to release it. He said, "That doesn't mean that we can't make some adjustments even though things aren't [inaudible]." Well, an order is an order; what do you mean you're going to make adjustments? Is it an execute order or isn't it? He was able to finesse that and walk away. But I will say, to his credit, once the thing—and to the president's credit—once the thing was launched, Vessey said, "Don't bother the CinC. We will have no micromanaging."

The president said the same thing. There were no calls. . . . [Unintelligible] "Look, you don't get into the guy's execution," which was true to form. Vessey gets high marks for that. He let McDonald, the theater commander, run the operation without standing on top of his back.

On Monday, after the Beirut thing, I have to say the chiefs got . . . were a little uneasy about this operation as to whether it really was necessary. At that time Austin, and indeed the Cubans were showing some sort of face that "Everything[s] fine, we can guarantee everybody's safety." I think the chiefs, certainly myself, felt that "I'm not so sure we really want to do this." The question came up to the secretary of defense, "How can we put this thing on hold?" There was a little bit . . .

Frank: The Commandant was pretty sensitive about that. We had come out with our Grenada monograph, ahead of time before the Army published anything, to a point where we don't really know an accurate count of



Army casualties. And of course the way the Army went ahead and decorated everybody so that the total number of . . .

Trainor: Yes, if it could be done wrong, the Army managed to do it wrong.

Frank: Every aspect.

Trainor: It was ridiculous as the decorations, it really was. We, again, we had the Iranian . . . the Mayaguez [incident in Puerto Rico near Cambodia], the Iranian thing, the bombing in Beirut, and the crisis of confidence on American military capabilities which was then turned into a kind of intramural—in hindsight—on the Grenada operation, which, in fact, it turned out to be anyway. But at least the Services should not have been involved in something like that. Recognizing the fact that it was put together very quickly. There was a lack of intelligence, a great uncertainty about the thing, a little confusion, really, as to what it is everybody was supposed to do besides rescue the students . . .

Frank: Yes, it got to be political.

Trainor: Yes, but recognizing the fact that there's no such thing as a military operation that goes smoothly, the guy that wins is the guy that makes the fewest mistakes at a critical time, I suppose. That's how these things work, so let's have our lessons learned, which is what we did in the Marine Corps, as you well know because you participated. We got a team right away with the MAU to go across the ocean with them, to get the oral testimony—which you headed—and we put a team together from [MCB] Quantico, [Virginia,] [unintelligible]. We got down there and analyzed the operation from lessons learned from the Marine Corps standpoint. This was all done. The Commandant put an interdict on it because of the sensitivity of it and wanted to have a cooling off period and ultimately released two copies of the Quantico report, one to [the] CG FMFLant and one to [the] CG FMFPac [Fleet Marine Force Pacific Command]. But I think at that point the thing had gone on too far in the sense that we saw this as an opportunity for . . . The White House and General Vessey saw this as an opportunity to avoid having another Nicaragua or another Guyana, so take the opportunity while it's there. My advice to the Commandant was "This thing is going to be a political disaster for Reagan. After what's happened in Beirut, for him to go in and invade this place and knock off this government will just be a political disaster for him." I was totally wrong.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: Totally wrong. It turned out to be a political plus. Again, misreading the American people. The American people wanted a success someplace in the world and they didn't care whose blood was spilled as long as it was somebody else's blood, as long as we came out as being the winner at a low cost—amazing. But before the thing went, the chiefs went over to the White House—and I don't believe it was the president, I believe it was the vice president, but I'm not positive of that. [He] asked each of them individually—Davis went as a stand-in for the Commandant because he had already gone to Beirut—and asked, "Do you support it? Should we go

or should we not go?" They all said yes, and General Davis, after caveating it that "The political fallout of this thing may be significant for the president, but having said that, the Marine Corps supports the operation." Then it was a success, but it was not a . . .

Frank: Political success, but not necessarily military.

Trainor: No, a military success is a military success, but I think it would have been a lot cleaner if it had been strictly a naval operation.

Frank: It's very interesting.

End SESSION I

## U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lieutenant General Bernard E. "Mick" Trainor, USMC (Ret)  
Interviewer: Mr. Benis M. Frank  
Place: Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, DC  
Date: 17 December 1985

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### SESSION II

Frank: Let's start out at the beginning Mick. You're a native of the city, New York City, and you enlisted in the Marine Corps in July of 1946, went through boot camp at [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] Parris Island [PI]. What was the postwar training down at PI like? I went down there in '43 and, of course, they changed the training schedule, the amount of time of boot camp, and I think our group was the first group that was ever allowed leave from boot training.

Trainor: We didn't get leave immediately. First, let me tell you the motivation for going.

Frank: Yes, sure.

Trainor: I think that's rather important. I grew up in the Depression and was in high school during the Second World War, the U.S. participation, and coming from a lower middle-class, white, blue-collar neighborhood there was an enormous sense of patriotism. There was no such thing as a draft dodger or a shirker in our neighborhood. Everybody went in.

Frank: What neighborhood, the Bronx?

Trainor: From the Bronx, yes.

Frank: What part of the Bronx?

Trainor: The South Bronx, just above Yankee Stadium, an area called Highbridge.

Frank: Highbridge?

Trainor: Yes, right above the Harlem River. My brother had gone into the [U.S.] Navy in 1943 under the V-5 program and he gained a commission in '45. And, of course, I wanted to get in the war. It was the thing to do for a hot-blooded youth, to go fight the Germans and the Japs and so forth. Much to my disappointment, the war ended before I graduated from high school. But I was still with the momentum and had been thinking about going in the Service up until the time the war ended, so that was still there. Plus the fact that I knew I wanted to go on to college; my parents had always made a big thing about education, and I couldn't afford to go to college.

Frank: What did your father do?

Trainor: My father was an auctioneer at the Brown and Secomb Fruit Auction Company in lower New York. So the GI Bill was very, very attractive because you went for two years and you got a program for four years in college. So I also saw that this was a way of going to college. Clearly I had no intention of making the Marine Corps a career.

I enlisted with a buddy of mine, and we went off to Parris Island. I remember we figured the Fourth of July weekend was probably a good time to go because it would be a holiday, and it was over the weekend, so we'd probably have a long weekend to adjust to the rigors of the training. What a mistake that was, and what a shock when we landed at Parris Island and I wondered what in the name of God I had gotten myself into. I was in Platoon 215 and my drill instructor [DI] was a fellow by the name of Peatris. He was a staff sergeant. He was from Chester, Pennsylvania, and had been a veteran of the Pacific campaigns and was a pretty tough bird, as all those DIs were. The quality of the recruits varied enormously. There was a group, like myself, who were high school graduates, who were looking probably for the GI Bill and a little high adventure. Then, there was a group of people who came from depressed areas, who did not have high school, who were simply looking for jobs.

The interesting thing is, years later, when I was a brigadier general and was down at Parris Island, I looked back at some of the old boot camp newspapers from the period when I went through. They used to have an Inquiring Photographer section in there, if you can believe that, where they would query the recruits as to why they came in the Marine Corps, where they came from, what their backgrounds were. It was astounding. Some of these gents, they left school at age 13 and worked in a Coca-Cola factory or worked in a mine or something of this nature.

Another thing that was amazing to see was the records on the rifle range. We fired the M1 [rifle] with a regular CD [firing] course, the same as it is today. I know down in Parris Island today, if you don't have 98 percent qualification there's something wrong [unintelligible]. Well, at that time, it was extraordinary, looking back at those old newspapers, if you had 40, 45 percent qualification on the rifle range with the M1 which was much easier to fire on the rifle range, particularly at the 500-yard line, than the M16 [rifle]. But if you got 40 or 50 percent, that was pretty good. So the standards, really, were much lower then than they are now.

The training schedule was not as demanding. Now, it was physical but it was not the scientific, physical approach that we have today. We get up in the morning at 0430 and you fall out for cal-hoppies, and run around the grinder a few times and do some rifle exercises.

Frank: Butts and muzzles.

Trainor: That's right. But the sort of thing . . . the physical development program that they have in recruit training now did not exist at that time. And in large measure you were at the mercy of your drill instructor. He didn't have the type of training schedule that he had to follow that they do today. So, while it was tough and it was a great deal of pressure—I mean it was a shocking experience for a young kid to go through—nowhere, in my judgment . . .

Frank: It's much harder today.

Trainor: Yes, it's much harder today than it was then. And you had the crap: the abuse, the physical abuse in a technical sense. It was a minor sort of thing,

but we stole some ice cream—impossible today, but in those days you could do it. And my buddy, Tom Berkery, was caught with a pint of ice cream. He had to tie it with a field scarf on the top of his head and stand out in the hot sun and let the ice cream drip down on his face and the sand fleas and everything. But everything rolled off our backs. I kind of enjoyed boot camp. It was a lot of fun and a manly sort of existence. We all had a great sense of humor, and at no point did I ever think that I wouldn't be able to get through boot camp. It was just simply a rite of passage, and I think we all accepted that.

Frank: Were you athletic in high school?

Trainor: I ran track. I ran track in high school and then track in college. So in terms of things of that nature, I had no trouble keeping up with running. I did suffer from the heat when we first went down there. The heat was terrible in South Carolina. The first couple of days of training, I blacked out a couple of times because of the heat. But then, like everybody else, I adjusted to it and I moved along. So, that was it. Parris Island was Parris Island, and legions of Marines have gone through it, and while it may change around the edges, the fundamental approach is still the same; beating you down to parade rest and making everybody the lowest common denominator and then building you up from there in a sense of corporate identity as opposed to individual identity. And that hasn't changed in recruit training.

Frank: What was your first assignment after boot camp?

Trainor: I had signed on for aviation duty only, which was available, and this was the period (by the way) that only 100,000 could serve. But at the time, the Marine Corps wasn't even getting 100,000. The Marine Corps was tenuous. I was not issued a pair of low-quarter shoes until months after I left recruit training. We went out without a full sea bag simply because they didn't have the money for a full sea bag, for whatever reason. I wore boondockers for months after boot camp before I got low-quarter shoes.

Frank: Christ, boondockers in that age were comfortable.

Trainor: Oh, yes, yes.

Frank: As compared—we still haven't got a good field shoe in the Marine Corps as far as I know. And of course, it's even worse with the unification and the Defense Supply [Logistics] Agency [DLA] program.

Trainor: Yes. Oh, no; there's no question, boondockers were delightfully comfortable. I wore them to the day that the boondocker left.

So we went up directly from Parris Island to MCAS Cherry Point, [North Carolina]. Those of us that were going for aviation duty were put on a plane at Paige Field and flown up to Cherry Point. Then we were split up there, and I was sent to be an air aerographer and got on-the-job training and became a weather watch there at Cherry Point. I didn't like the Marine Corps; I was bored to death with it. I enjoyed the aerographic work, but Cherry Point you know, was nothing for a young fellow; there's absolutely nothing, very little in the way of facilities. You had sports and we had a movie and a PX and that was just about it.

Frank: No good liberty around there?

Trainor: No, there was no good liberty at all. So I was kind of disappointed and was just biding my time to get out. The Marine Corps was coming back at the time and they were giving early outs to people because we were being cut back and the budget was the size of—instead of 100,000 I think the Marine Corps was maybe down to somewhere around 75K [75,000]. But things were pretty much a nickel-and-dime operation at the time.

Well, in December or before that, I received a letter from my mother with a clipping from *The New York Times* that said that the Navy was opening a postwar program to supplement the regular officer population of the naval services; that the [U.S.] Naval Academy [in Annapolis, Maryland,] could not provide the number of regulars that were going to be requisite in the postwar period. And instead of enlarging the Naval Academy, they were going to build on their experience in World War II and make use of civilian colleges and institutions that were already in place under the V-12 and V-5 programs. And this was the program that was called the Holloway [Plan] program, which is now NROTC [Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps]. The article went on to mention that there would be a certain number of candidates who would become midshipmen in the Navy Reserve who would come out of the active forces.

So my mother sent the clipping, and I went to the first sergeant and inquired about it to see if he knew anything about it, which he did not. He said that he would find out. And he found out, and I applied. And on the 13th of December 1946 on a rainy Saturday morning, in the mess hall, I took the examination for the program and interviewed and so forth. I was picked up for the program in the spring of 1947 and sent, in June, I guess it was—June or July of '47—up to [Naval Station] Great Lakes [in Illinois] where they were going to hold a kind of an ad hoc prep school for all the people that were picked up in the Navy and the Marine Corps for this program. So we went up to Great Lakes and went through some classes in English and mathematics and physics, as kind of a refresher for college.

In the meantime, they went through the administrative procedures of getting us placed in the various schools. As far as I was concerned, there was only one school and that was [the University of] Notre Dame. My father was part of the “subway alumni” in New York City. So I was going to put in for Notre Dame. But a sergeant, Gerry O’Keefe, who was a friend of mine and remains a friend to this day, said, “How about Holy Cross?” I had barely heard of [College of the] Holy Cross [in Massachusetts], only insofar as their rivalry with Boston College in football. So I said, “Well, why not?” I then put in for Holy Cross, as did he, and we were both picked up. We remained roommates for our four years of college up at the Cross, and as I say, he’s still a very good friend. Was there a Father Fred Gallagher teaching English up there and a Navy chaplain?

Frank:

Trainor: Big, red-headed fellow?

Frank: No, he wasn't red headed. He was tall and rather thin. He'd been a chaplain with the 1st Division on Guadalcanal [in the Solomon Islands].

Trainor: There were some former chaplains up there. Did he live in [inaudible] with me? There was the priest that was on the [USS] *Franklin* [CV 13], Father [Joseph T.] [O']Callahan.

Frank: Got the Medal of Honor.

Trainor: He taught up there. But no, I don't recall any Father Gallagher, a former chaplain. At any rate, Gerry and I went up to the Cross, then, and were sworn in as midshipmen—this was in early September of '47—sworn in as midshipmen in the Navy Reserve. Then we took our course of studies under the Jesuits. I majored in history. Each summer we'd go off on a summer cruise, pretty much the way they do today in the program. Oddly enough, my first cruise was aboard the USS *Columbus* (CA 74), a heavy cruiser. Later on, I had the privilege of commanding the Marine detachment on the same ship. So I took my midshipman cruise on it, and we went to the Mediterranean. It was there that the impact of the war came home to me because Italy and the Mediterranean were still devastated from the war. Places like Genoa, [Italy,] where the water wasn't running, and you had to go out to public fountains, and all that sort of stuff.

The second year we went to a combination aviation/amphibious cruise. We went to Pensacola, [Florida,] for half the summer and to [Naval Amphibious Base] Little Creek [in Virginia] for the other half. Pensacola was a lot of fun. We were treated like gentlemen. Little Creek was very ill-organized, miserable, and a waste of time. That turned a lot of people away from the Marine Corps because there were Marine troop handlers there and amphibious training and everybody was down on the Marines. But in fact it was a Navy mismanaged operation.

Frank: You could have opted for a Navy commission couldn't you?

Trainor: Oh, yes; no question of it, yes. But there was no doubt in my mind that I was going for a Marine and not a Navy commission. The third year, then, those of us who were going in the Marines went down to Quantico for what today is called "Bulldog training", I guess. But it was the same sort of training, basically, that the PLC [Platoon Leaders Course] and the ROTCs [Reserve Officer Training Corps] go through today. It was less a screening course than it is now. But it was getting you oriented towards the Marine Corps, and it was physically demanding.

Frank: Summer at Quantico, sure.

Trainor: Yes, there wasn't the sense that you were going to wash out or something. In that sense, it was a developing and a pro forma thing as opposed to a screening process, which it is now. Then, in June of 1950, as a matter of fact, we were on the rifle range, and at that time the rifle range, as you may recall, Ben, was right where the chapel and the headquarters are now.

Frank: Yes, right.

Trainor: And we were firing on the range when a ripple came down the line to the effect that a war had started in some place called Korea, and that the Marines were going in. I tell you, in almost 24 hours the place was

emptied out. Quantico was emptied. It seemed all hands were sent to the Far East and they left the place with a caretaker. All of the officer troop handlers that we had, who were Naval Academy graduates from the class of 1949, Tex Lawrence, Bobby Hunt, all the football players who had gone into the Marine Corps, Tom Parsons—they were our troop handlers, and they just disappeared. They were gone the day after the Marines got involved in the thing. So we finished there and went back to college and were commissioned in June of '51 [and] went back down to Quantico to The Basic School.

Now Basic School, because of the Korean War, had been digested. From nine months, it had been reduced to five months and subjects—such as administration, supply, and that sort of thing—had been deleted. Everything was focused on fighting.

Frank: Special Basic classes?

Trainor: It became a Special Basic. So instead of being the 9th Basic Course, ours became the 9th Special Basic Course [SBC].

Frank: I was in the 11th SBC.

Trainor: Were you in the 11th?

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: So you went through just about the same time then. The 7th, the 9th, and the 10th were all in the summer of 1951. You were probably out at [Camp] Upshur, were you?

Frank: No, we were at Mainside in the red brick barracks.

Trainor: Okay, I guess it was 7th was out at Upshur.

Frank: As a matter of fact, I got out of Basic School, and my period of obligation was over, but I extended for a regular commission. So they kept me on at Headquarters Battalion, and I stayed in Charlie Barracks as the company commander of the Ordnance School Company. By that time, they'd moved all the people out of Basic School.

Trainor: Well now, where you went to Basic School that was basically where all the Basic Schools went through, with the regular classes.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: But then when the war started, they used Upshur and where we went was off in the "white elephants," out where OCS [Officer Candidate School] is right now. One half of the class was on the river side of the tracks, and the second half of the alphabet—that's where I was—in the white, what we called the white elephants, the white wooded barracks that are out there. The other half [was] on the other side of the tracks with the red barracks where OCS is today.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: And that's where we had gone through our midshipmen training also, so we simply moved, basically, moved back into the same positions; same racks even.

Frank: Cinder City?

Trainor: Well, no; Cinder City was . . .

Frank: On the other side of the tracks.



Trainor: . . . on the other side of the tracks, but that's down where, near where the Ed [Education] Center is now.

Frank: Right, um hmm.

Trainor: That was Cinder City. And that was a BOQ [bachelor officers quarters], usually for bachelor officers who were instructors out at Basic School. But no, I was down at the far end of the airfield.

Frank: Oh, okay, yes, right; where they have OCS now.

Trainor: That's right.

Frank: Right near the hangar for the museum.

Trainor: That's right.

Frank: Okay, right.

Trainor: That's where we went to Basic School.

Frank: Right.

Trainor: So we went through there and graduated on the 15th of . . . I think it was the 15th of December of '51. Basic School was oriented toward getting you ready for Korea, as I'm sure it was with your group, and everybody was kind of excited about going to war. There were, I believe, 80 of us who were selected for an air draft to fly out to Korea. The normal draft at that time, surface draft, was the 17th draft. But there were 80 of us because of the shortage of officers.

Frank: Yes, I remember.

Trainor: We were to fly out. But we had to undergo cold weather training first, so we were sent out to [MCB] Camp Pendleton, [California]. We were to go up to Pickel Meadows and got on a bus and got as far as Bishop, California. This was now January of '52. We got as far as Bishop, and the snow was so heavy that we couldn't go any further. That was the winter that one of the passenger trains got caught in the Donner Pass and had to be resupplied by air, and they had a terrible time getting people out of there. Well, in typical Marine Corps fashion, we were to go up there for cold weather training because you couldn't go to Korea without being stamped "Approved for Cold Weather." So what we did was climb out of the bus and for three days we stomped around the hills around Bishop, California, and then got back on the bus and drove back down to Camp Pendleton, and they stamped us "Winter Warfare Qualified."

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: Then we were put on a troop train and the troop train took us up to San Francisco, [California]. We were all regulars and just a wild bunch of guys, and we were picturing ourselves as John Wayne the war hero. [First Lieutenant Clarence G.] "Griff" Moody [Jr.], I don't know if you remember old Griff Moody.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: Griff Moody was our OIC [officer in charge]. He had graduated, I guess, in '49 and he was in charge of this gaggle of lieutenants. We got to San Francisco and were bussed over to Treasure Island. This was a Saturday, and we assumed that we would have liberty on the weekend and fly out on Monday. That was a little bit like my assumption that when I go down to

Parris Island I'd have the weekend to adjust to the place before training started. No way. We were not getting any liberty. We were flying out for Korea that night. So the afternoon was spent, by many of our number, in the bar, and by the time it came to fly out we were a fairly drunken lot of lieutenants, I'll tell you that.

We were put on the Martin [JRM] Mars, the old Martin Mars flying boat and had a jet-assisted take off at San Francisco Bay. The officer that was sitting next to me, who had had entirely too much to drink, managed to get sick all over my uniform. We flew out in greens; we didn't have any field equipment. That uniform, festooned with his spill, remained in my sea bag [laughing], and when I came back from Korea I pulled it out and the thing had grown hair. But we flew from San Francisco out to Hawaii in the Martin Mars. Then we were split up and went in smaller drafts in what was the little four-engine reciprocal plane. Wasn't it the [Douglas] C-47 [R4D] or [Douglas] C-54 [R5D]?

Frank: C-54.

Trainor: Yes, the C-54.

Frank: I was out at Pearl [Harbor, Hawaii,] at that time at FMFPac. As a matter of fact, I was out there before I went to Basic School. And a lot of the guys who had gone through had been commissioned at the end of World War II and had stayed in the Reserves were called back on and had to go through boot camp again.

Trainor: Right.

Frank: Or Junior School.

Trainor: To Basic School.

Frank: Basic School rather, and also through Junior School. They were sent to Junior School some and I don't know what the basis was, but there were some reluctant dragons there who were chased out.

Trainor: No question about it. We had a number of people who had gone through various officer programs during World War II and were commissioned at the end of the war, and then immediately released from active duty. And they were called up and so we had some in our Basic class. They were very, very unhappy people, but they had just managed to get themselves started in business and various professions. And no, they were not at all happy to be called back up. Now, the group that we flew out with though was all volunteers. None of those were in that particular category. We were all hot to trot.

So, from after the split up into these C-54 loads at Hawaii, we flew from Hawaii to Johnson Island, from Johnson to Midway, from Midway to Guam; and it was an interesting situation. We had kind of a layover in Guam, and I was not the most popular guy in my greens festooned with vomit in the tropical climes, but I did the best I could to kind of clean it off. But I was standing at the bar waiting for our plane there in Guam, and got talking to a guy who was a Navy captain at the Naval Air Station [Agana] there, by the name of Gay. I enquired of him whether he was the famous Ensign Gay of Torpedo Squadron 8, and he allowed as how he

was and he was telling me all about that particular operation in Midway. Then we finally split, and I ran into a Navy lieutenant who had been one of my instructors up at Holy Cross. He was now stationed out in Guam, and I was very much impressed and told him I had run into Ensign Gay who was now a captain. And he laughed, and said, "Ensign Gay, no; Captain Gay, yes. He's the air station dentist." I must have had my chain pulled a little bit. Well, we flew from Guam, then, into Itami [air base] outside of Osaka, [Japan].

Frank: You had changed at [NAS] Barbers Point in Hawaii on the way across, where you go down.

Trainor: That's right and where we go on the -54s.

Frank: Right, the Mars came in down there, the airfield there, the John Marshall Airfield.

Trainor: I have no idea. All I know is I got off the Mars and got on another airplane.

Frank: I flew out of Honolulu on a Mars.

Trainor: It was exciting taking off in a Mars with the JATO [jet-assisted takeoff].

Trainor: So we got into Itami and were given liberty 'til midnight and went to beautiful downtown Osaka. I thought that was fascinating; my first trip to the Orient. It was bitter cold. But I was suffering, along with the rest of the group, from nervous stomach and anxiety because we knew we were flying off at the wee hours of the morning. So we all got back at midnight. Now, the interesting thing is that we didn't have any field equipment, still in our greens. So we brought that to the attention of the authorities there at Itami and they outfitted us. Essentially we stowed our greens.

Frank: In a footlocker?

Trainor: No, a sea bag.

Frank: Oh, you didn't have your footlockers with you?

Trainor: No, no. We had nothing but a sea bag. So we stowed our greens in there and we were given a modicum of cold weather equipment: field jackets, utilities, a pair of boots, and gloves and a cover, and that was it. About 0200 or 0300 in the morning, we were loaded on a C-47 and took off for Korea. I have no idea of where we landed. It was on the east coast; it was down the coast; it was nothing but an airstrip, and there was a pyramidal tent there with a stovepipe sticking out of the top of it. You could see nothing around but hills and snow, and it was a gray, overcast day with snow showers and wind coming down and cold. We got off that plane and God, I tell you, we were just a little nervous, and we could hear what we thought was gunfire in the hills. We expected to see Chinese coming on down at us at any second.

So we just stood around there. The plane shut down. The pilots went into the tent, which actually was the air control tower. But there wasn't room for anything other than the crew and the people who were running the airstrip. So we all stood out there with our fingers up our butts, just freezing to death. Then, eventually, what seemed like hours later, a convoy of six-by [trucks] drove into view. They stopped and these grimy,

scroungy animals came tumbling out of the back. God, they looked whiskered and [had] dirty faces and scruffy old helmets and parkas held together with comm [communications] wire and safety pins. They got down, and they're all hooting and hollering at all the green lieutenants down in there. This was a draft that was going home. They went down the line, and they dropped their helmets in one pile and their M1s in another pile, a bandoleer of ammunition in a third, took off their parkas and dropped that in a final pile and got on these airplanes giving us the finger as they went, and giving that old, familiar boot camp cry, "You'll be sorry." Then we were instructed to go by and pick up a parka, pick up a rifle, pick up a bandoleer, pick up a helmet, and climb on the truck. So we did, and we were off to war. Well, we drove north for the rest of the day and got into division headquarters, 1st [Marine] Division headquarters, which was up on the east coast. I forget the name of the valley, even if I ever did know it, but we stopped at the division headquarters and piled out, and we were told that we would stay there overnight. We were put in a big squad tent, and everybody was given a stretcher. We were simply given a stretcher and our parkas and we were given Mickey Mouse boots, and that was the way we slept. It was my luck that I had a stretcher that was broken, which kept collapsing on me, so it was an uncomfortable night. But, let me tell this, there's always a silver lining someplace. The division chaplain was a priest by the name of Father Vinny Lonagen, who had been a parish priest back in the Bronx when I was a kid coming along . . .

Frank: Oh, you knew him?

Trainor: . . . and also taught at the same high school that I went to. So I went over and Father Vinny had gone into the Navy during World War II and had stayed in as a chaplain, spent most of his time serving with the Marines. So I stopped in to see Father Vinny Lonagen, and, like a good Irish priest, he had a bottle of whiskey there, and I warmed myself up along with [Second Lieutenant James W.] "Wes" Hammond and [Second Lieutenant Gerard P.] "Gerry" O'Keefe and a guy named [Second Lieutenant James B. VanAirsdale] "Jim" VanAirsdale.

Frank: So Wes went out with you too?

Trainor: Yes. Wes was in the same class.

Frank: He was [U.S.] Naval Academy.

Trainor: He was a Naval Academy graduate, yes. Most early drafts were all made up of Naval Academy and later NROTC [Naval ROTC] with a lot of PLCs.

The next morning we were given a good breakfast and then lined up and somebody went down the, oh, that wasn't the first thing. "How many Naval Academy people do you have?" The Naval Academy guys put up their hands. Those of us who were NROTC figured that we were second-class citizens and that the choice jobs were going to go to the Naval Academy types. He said, "You, you, you, and you," and picked out a bunch of them and said, "Come along with me, I'm the artilleryman. You guys know all about naval gunfire so you're going to be our forward

observers.” That made them unhappy because most of them all wanted to be with rifle platoons. The rest of us were broken up into essentially three groups; one for the 1st, one for the 5th, and one for the 7th Marines.

I was in the truck for the 1st Marines. We were put on a truck and driven up to the headquarters of the 1st Marines. I got there and spent very little time there, and I was told that I would go to the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, and went to their CP [command post]. Now all the battalion CPs’ rear were down, and all of the artillery was in this valley called Artillery Valley. I have never seen so much artillery in my life. But the area in that part of Korea was so compartmented that this was really the only place to put the artillery.

Frank: This was in February of ’52.

Trainor: End of January, early February ’52, yes. You had the 1st Marines and the 7th Marines on line; 5th Marines were in reserve. So I checked in. The CO [commanding officer] of the 1st Battalion was a guy by the name of [Colonel] John [E.] Gorman, very salty guy.

Frank: Oh, yes. Football player, Navy Cross winner in World War II.

Trainor: That’s right.

Frank: Hard charger.

Trainor: He was. We were split up then, into companies. I was told I was going to C Company along with a guy by the name of [Second Lieutenant Donald E.] “Don” McQuinn and [Second Lieutenant Thomas R.] “Tom” Stuart.

Frank: Oh, yes.

Trainor: He was the son of [Lieutenant] General [James A.] Stuart, and his brother, [Second Lieutenant Jerome C.] “Jerry” Stuart, was also with us, and he was going to B Company. So we were told that it was too late that day to go up on the line and find ourselves a place to sleep, and also find ourselves some equipment because we still didn’t have equipment.

Frank: No weapons?

Trainor: No weapons, no sleeping bag, nothing!

Frank: You had to find it?

Trainor: Yes, typical Marine drill. Second lieutenants should be able to take care of themselves. Well, we scrounged up the equipment, and I got an M1 vice a carbine because I had always heard that carbines froze up, so I took an M1. And I got a sleeping bag and got myself sorted out. And being a smart city kid, I knew the one warm place around town without holes—and it was cold, believe me—it would be the first aid tent. So I stuck my head in there and asked if I could sleep there for the night, and I was told yes. So I got my sleep in there.

The next morning, after a good breakfast, we were told we were going up on the line; got in a jeep—McQuinn, Stuart and myself—and drove up to this icy road. And there was a frozen river off to our left and we got to a bend in the river and there was a stop sign. The jeep stopped there and the driver told us, with a certain amount of glee, that that was as far as he could take us. We had to cross the river and then go on up this hill, which was directly across the way from us on the far side of the

frozen stream. It was Hill 749. He said, "But don't tarry going across the frozen river because you're in the gun sights of the North Koreans. They zapped 76[mm] [guns] at us down there." So we didn't need any encouragement, and as we went dashing across the river nobody shot at us. But then, as we started up the hill, there was an enormous explosion behind us, and we thought that they had spotted us and were shooting at us and we hit the deck. It turned out it was the engineers blowing some holes in the ground to put some AT [antitank] positions in there.

We didn't see anybody as we climbed the hill. There were just lines of communications wire that we used as banisters to pull ourselves up on the snow and ice. But we just didn't see anybody. Occasionally, a fuzzy little face would stick up out of a hole someplace and would pop down like it was a prairie dog. Got to the top of the hill exhausted (it was a long climb with all our gear on our back and on the ice and snow) and went into the company CP. The company commander was a guy by the name of [Captain Kenneth F.] "Ken" Swiger, captain in the Reserves, who had been called back to active duty; semipro football player, big lanky sort of guy who was just one of the most pleasant people in the world. He never took a strain at anything. The first sergeant was a guy by the name of Rogers, who was a real old pro; one of the southern bird-hunter types, and he made sure Swiger didn't get into trouble and everything went right. He was kind of the infrastructure of the company; a delightful old guy, he really was, old World War II vet. So we took our leisure there in the company CP and had a cop of coffee, and then Swiger asked us did we have any particular druthers as to what platoons we went to.

I was assigned to 2d Platoon and Clem [?] to the 1st Platoon, and Tom Stuart to the 3d Platoon. I was to relieve a guy by the name of Russ Whitler [?]. Russ had been wounded three times, and he was still on the position. Now, at that time, they had the battalion aid station up on top of the hill because guys getting hit in the cold there, by the time they got them down to the bottom of the hill they'd be dead. So the battalion aid station, battalion doctor, was in fact up on top of the hill, which struck me as an anomaly that the battalion CP was down in the valley and the medical CO was up on the top of the hill with us. So, at any rate, I took office in mid-morning or early afternoon in the beginning of February, I guess it was, or the end of January. It was a cold, wintry day, and I went over and Whitler came out. I introduced myself, and he said, "Fine, my name is Whitler." And he said, pointing north, "They're that way," and pointing south, "and I'm going this way." He looked out and he handed me a map with his overlay of the positions, picked up his gear, and walked off the hill. And I was now, for the first time in my life, in command, in command of the 2d Platoon, C Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines. Although, as I was soon to find out, I really wasn't in command.

I went to this little hooch that had been dug in the side of the hill and covered with shelter halves and ponchos, which was the platoon CO, and met my platoon sergeant. He, in fact, was a gunnery sergeant, World

War II type by the name of Wagner. He was a World War II vet. He was very cold and indifferent toward me—barely polite. The platoon guide was a guy by the name of Berryman. There was a radio operator in there and two corpsmen. I was just about as welcome as the plague it seemed to me. Nobody paid that much attention to me, and I kind of settled in. I could see where my predecessor had his gear and dropped my pack there. Having done that, I turned around and said to Wagner, “Wagner, I think I’d like to see the lines.” Wagner turned around stirring a cup of cocoa, and he said, “They’re right out there lieutenant.” I was a little bit taken back, but I said, “All right.”

So I went out of the little hooch and went through the connecting trench out to the forward line and really didn’t see very much. There was a trench line facing north. The hill dropped off and there was a river valley down below. Then it rose up on the other side, and there was a hill, which was covered with snow and pockmarks, which were artillery spots. I just assumed that that’s where the North Koreans were. Didn’t see anybody in the trench line, but there were little fighting holes and covered hooches along the way. I didn’t realize at the time that all of the activity took place at night. In the daytime, people improved their positions and slept. Then I’d see a skuzzy face sticking out, all blackened from the typical stove that they had manufactured while trying to keep warm. I ran into an officer who was the company air officer who was up on our position and apparently came up very frequently because he gave me a pretty good view of the area. His name escapes me now. But he was very good. He gave me a complete orientation of the whole area and I felt a lot more comfortable having that. But I still feel a certain degree of chagrin about the way I had been welcomed by Wagner and company.

Hill 749 was part of a complex of hills, which ran east to west overlooking the river—which I guess was the Soyang-gang River. We tied in on the left with B Company, which had Hill 812 and really was the closest to the enemy because there was a bend in the lines and the enemy positions came within something like 100 yards of the Marines on 812.

That was known as Luke’s Castle a hardened position that the North Koreans held. It was a place where there was always some sort of activity going on. But the position that I was in, 479 was separated from the North Korean positions by several hundred yards.

Frank: You were over on the right side of Korea. You hadn’t moved to the Panmunjom.

Trainor: No, this is on the east coast of Korea.

Frank: I see. You hadn’t moved to the Panmunjom border.

Trainor: No, entirely different terrain. We didn’t move over there until March.

I went back to the CP and still was not greeted with any degree of warmth. I had some chow, and then the day dragged on. The night set in, and I went out, oh, I guess it was around 2200, to visit the p——s tube on the back slope. I’m standing there—it was cold and windy and the snow was coming down—and all of the sudden I hear “bang-bang-bang-bang”

and “brup-brup-brup” and an explosion of hand grenades and then a flare going off and the crump of mortar fire. And as I’m standing there, relieving myself, you know, this looks a little bit like something out of Dante’s *Inferno*. It’s all taking place on the forward slope of this hill that I’m on; and with the snow reflecting off the flares and the explosions, it was a fascinating scene. But then the reality sunk in on me that we were under attack; my platoon was under attack. So I hastily returned to the CP.

At the CP Wagner had a sound-powered phone in his right hand and a sound-powered phone in the left and the two of them tied together with an old dirty piece of cloth and hung around his neck. One of them went back to the company mortars, the other one out to the automatic weapons position. Wagner was talking back and forth into each of them giving instructions and telling the machine gunners not to open fire and give their positions away unless they had a real choice target. These are the BAR [Browning automatic rifle] men. And yelling at the mortars—apparently there were a couple of duds—and the guy in charge of the mortars wanted to stop the mortar fire to check the lot number. Wagner was telling him to keep the mortars coming, that even if they didn’t explode they might hit them on the head. Everybody else just seemed to be going about their business. A Marine stuck his head into the hooch, one of the fire team leaders, and asked Berryman for some hand grenades. Berryman started to raise hell with him about using up too many hand grenades. Here, from my point of view, we’re under the world’s most desperate attack—nobody has ever been attacked like this before in their lives—and here Berryman is quibbling with this guy over hand grenades, and I’m saying under my breath, “Give him the hand grenades; give him the hand grenades.” [Laughter] But these birds were just taking it all just as a matter of routine, and the firefight continued. I thought I had to show my authority and made some sort of suggestion to Wagner, and to this day I don’t remember what it was. But Wagner just took the phones down, looked at me, and it was though the war stopped. Everything became silent, and he looked at me with those cold, steel blue eyes, and said, “Lieutenant, why don’t you make a cup of coffee.” So I made a cup of coffee.

That went on for a while, and I really resented it. And I was damning myself. He had gotten the initiative on me, and he had dominated me, and I really felt that I had failed in taking proper command of my platoon. But it did dawn on me that what had happened was . . . Look, Wagner had this platoon that he was responsible for, and he was a combat-seasoned veteran. He was getting a brand new second lieutenant, right out of an abbreviated Basic School, who was going to take over the platoon. And no way was he going to jeopardize his life and the lives of the guys of the platoon to this guy until he got his measure. So this was his way of doing it. Maybe it wasn’t the best way, but I remember at the time, I thought to myself, man, I’ll never come as a replacement to any other war. This is not the way to go to war. So I can understand it, and really, he, I



guess, was telling me that I had won my bars, but I hadn't won my spurs yet. Little by little, he relinquished authority to me when he started to take my measure.

I'll never forget—and frankly, it was probably the proudest day of my life, one that was even prouder than when I got my commission—was when we went out, the two of us, on a reconnaissance. We were going to provide a base of fire for, I guess, a platoon out of Alpha Company that was going to make a raid. We were to provide a base of fire and also covering fire for the men when they were through. So we went out, skinning on our bellies in the snow, to try to find a good position to set up the base of fire. I found what I thought was a pretty good spot, and I turned to Wagner, and said, “Gunny, this looks like a reasonable spot. What do you think?” And I'll never forget it; Wagner never even looked at me, he was just looking north into the North Korean positions and as far north as the Yalu River. He simply said, “I don't know lieutenant. You're the platoon leader that's in charge.” That was his way of telling me that I now had command of that platoon. How long this took, I don't know. I guess maybe it was a case of maybe four or five days, just so he could get my measure. And there after, our relationship became very close. Later, he was killed, and I tell you I still remember him in my prayers daily.

So during this period we also had Operation Clam-Up, and this was designated to capture a prisoner where we made the pretense of withdrawing from our line, and they had the Marines in reserve, the 5th Marines, they would march to the rear during the day and then at night they'd march up to the front again. And then, the next day they'd march to the rear. The rest of us along the lines had no fires or anything. We just had to stay in our positions. The hope was to get the Chinese to think that we had withdrawn and come across and kind of probe our position so we could take a prisoner. I don't think the thing worked very well.

Frank: Did you ever send out any snatch raids and so on?

Trainor: Well, that was the one that we were providing covering fire for which was about a week into when I was with the platoon. That was for a snatch. But my platoon did not get any snatch missions.

Frank: Were you doing any patrolling at all?

Trainor: Oh, yes. Every night down to the river, and we also set ambushes down there. The guys that did the ambush had the toughest job because they had to lay still, and it was so damn cold. I, in the breaking in period, would go out on the patrols, and went out on two of the ambushes as I recall.

Frank: That's scary doing that.

Trainor: Yes. You know, again, you had to establish your bona fides as I quickly learned.

Frank: Oh, sure.

Trainor: So then, after Clam-Up, we, the 1st Marines, came out of the line and went back into the reserve and the 5th Marines relieved us. We went back to [Camp] Tripoli, which was the reserve area. Then I finally got to know my platoon because up to this time, you just identified guys by the color of

their whiskers and by the dirty field jacket[s] or the dirty parka[s] they had on. We got back there and got all clean equipment, not new, but laundered stuff, and hell, I had a hard time identifying guys. Then we went through very serious training. We had a very rigorous training program back there to the point that the troops would have much preferred to have been up on the line than back there training. We humped the hills and so forth and practiced attacking up fingers, which is really what had taken place prior to the winter of '51-'52 setting in. We learned regular techniques for doing that.

Life in the rear was pretty good. We lived in a pyramidal tent, all the company officers. We had a stove in there, and they had movies at night. We had our little officers' club and a little bit of liquor came in so you could get a drink. The food wasn't all that bad, really, and the training was tough, so it was kind of interesting. I enjoyed it.

Frank: John Gorman really drove that battalion.

Trainor: Yes, yes. It was a good battalion, a damn good battalion. Then we started to get rumors that we were going to go on an offensive, which didn't make a hell of a lot of sense to us because it was March and the weather was still absolutely frigid.

Frank: Who had the division? [Major General Oliver P.] "O. P." Smith?

Trainor: No.

Frank: [Major General Gerald C.] "Jerry" Thomas?

Trainor: Let's see. [Major General John T.] Selden had it later on. I don't know who had the division at that point. Selden had it over on the west coast. But as a second lieutenant, I could care less who had the division. I just was focused on my platoon; I don't even know who the regimental commander was at the time. Although I knew my battalion commander, I rarely saw him. There was sometimes a major when we were up there on the hill, Major [Leo V. R.] "Lee" Gross. When we went back to Tripoli we got to see the battalion commander, Leo Gross.

Frank: Oh, yes, "Pope Leo the Gross."

Trainor: Yes, he was a Reserve officer and he was indicative . . . probably the worst example of a professional officer I've ever seen. Yes, he really was bad—a self-infatuated individual playing a role all the time with no professional depth at all.

Frank: Up to the time he was colonel, he was the same way. He was in the G-3 section when we were over at Headquarters [Marine Corps] under G-3.

Trainor: Well, at any rate, the stories of an offensive were squashed in favor of what seemed to make more sense, and that was that we were going to move to the west coast of Korea and relieve the ROK [Republic of Korea] Capitol Division, which apparently had some indications that they weren't quality stuff. And there was the fear that there would be a spring offensive on the part of the Chinese. On the east coast, we were facing North Koreans. The Chinese, apparently, were over on the west, and it was the feeling that they would make an attack down the Suwon corridor and try to seize Seoul, [South Korea] and along the northern plain of the area.

How true all this was, I have no idea. But that was what we were led to believe.

[The] 1st Marines, being in reserve, were the first ones to move although it was going to be super secret. We were loaded up on trucks sometime in March. It was after St. Patrick's Day because we celebrated St. Patrick's Day on the east coast. I went for the longest, coldest truck ride of my life. We went completely across the waist of Korea, in the dark of night, and got over to the west coast in the morning. Then we stopped in one place after it got daylight and had doughnuts and some coffee sponsored by the "Rock of the Marne" division, the Army's 3d [Infantry] Division but I remember "Rock of the Marne" was on the sign. And there was a kindly old major there who looked old enough to be my grandfather who was trying to make sure that everybody got their coffee and doughnuts. And I recall that struck me as being so strange. I really didn't know the United States Army, and I thought, "My God, this kindly old man, fatherly type, who was looking after everybody like a mother hen; the sort of thing that you expect a first sergeant to do, and here he is—an Army major." And I thought, "What the hell kind of people do they have in the Army?"

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: No disrespect for this guy, but it was strange that a major would be seeing to the well-being of a bunch of scruffy old Marine riflemen and a second lieutenant. But we did appreciate the coffee and the doughnuts. Then we got over and went behind a hill, Hill 229, Paekhak-san, which was Hill . . . I guess it was Hill 229.

Frank: Was the big one up in front of . . .

Trainor: . . . was the one that was just north of Paekhak-san.

Frank: That's right.

Trainor: That was the one that was held by the Chinese.

Frank: Yes, overlooking the whole 1st Division line.

Trainor: That's right, and that became a fortress. But this was Paekhak-san and was just up from Munsan-ni. We had driven through Seoul on our way up, and it was very depressing. My God, Seoul was just absolutely . . .

Frank: Wasted.

Trainor: . . . nothing, but was like the movies I had seen of Berlin, [Germany,] and places like that in World War II. It really was wasted; that was the word for it.

So we got up there in the morning, and we were told that we were to relieve an outpost line that night, and that we would go up and make contact with our opposite number up on the OPLR [outpost line of resistance] during the day. So we went out, and I was to take Hill 59. McQuinn was on my left and Tom Stuart was on my right and to the low ground where there was nobody occupying that ground. So I went up and saw my Korean counterpart who looked like a Chinese warlord, and we had translators with us, permanently assigned to us. So we made arrangements for the relief. The relief was supposed to take place at

midnight that night under complete radio silence. I went back and crossed the line to 229, and there was a little guy sitting out there in no-man's-land between the OP and the MLR [main line of resistance]. A little Korean, just by himself with a rifle, and as we went by he stood up and went to present arms. I couldn't understand what in the name of God this guy was doing out there. I was told by somebody, after I got back in, that that was a penalty. The guy had done something wrong and he had to stay out there for three days or something like that by himself. I said, "Boy, that's something else."

So, we got all tooled up, that platoon and my orders, and we moved out that night. Then came a fight between Tom Stuart and Leo Gross, because Stuart had looked over his area, which was unoccupied, and Gross said he was going to put the platoon down there. The contact was supposed to be right to left. I was supposed to contact McQuinn on my left; Stuart was supposed to contact me on his left, my right. But I was up on Hill 59, and he was down in the low ground, and it really was untenable. So Stuart got into a big argument with Gross over this.

Meantime, John Gorman had left and we had a new battalion commander, a guy by the name of [Lieutenant Colonel] John [H.] Papurca, who now runs a very successful VW business down in Jacksonville, North Carolina. Papurca was a 0301. Now let me tell you, at this time, they were cranking a lot of World War II guys, who had no combat experience, in and rotating the battalion commanders and letting them earn their 0302. At that time they had to serve something like three months in command before you got a 0302.

Frank: Well, at that time there was a tremendous fight to get battalions out in Korea.

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: You know, if you were a reservist and happened to get a battalion, you were lucky. The regulars were scrambling, especially those who hadn't commanded or hadn't any World War II combat experience on their records.

Trainor: Well I guess Papurca was in this category, but he was a very new guy and he was kind of . . . I don't remember him entering into the discussion with Gross. [Major] Stanley [N.] Mcleod was the 3 [operations officer] but he was the 3, I think, later on. I just remember the fight between Gross and Stuart, and Gross kept telling Stuart, "Tom, I have every confidence in you that you'll be able to do it." And he was blowing smoke up Tom's rear end. But nothing was changed; Tom still had to go out in that position.

So that night we moved out, and shortly after going through the lines, it was forcibly brought to my attention that I had forgotten to tell the point about this poor little Korean that was sitting out there. As we were moving out, the guy on the point was a BAR man, a fellow by the name of Barlow. I can just, in my mind's eye, see this poor little Korean standing up and coming to present arms in the dark and Barlow just reacted. Seeing

the figure he just opened up and blew this guy away. That kind of shook everybody up and shattered the silence, and we lay dormant for a while. But he was dead.

Frank: He did get him.

Trainor: Oh, he killed him, yes. He killed him. So we then continued on, and in the best second lieutenant tradition I managed to get lost. [Laughing] I took the point and wandered around. I figured getting chilled was less indignity than getting lost, and of course the troops were all p——g and moaning and grouching about the lieutenant getting them lost. The thing that really concerned me was stepping off the banks and into the paddies which were all frozen and stepping into a minefield, because that area had been fought over some time, two or three times, and Christ, there were mines all over the place that were unrecorded.

But at any rate, I finally found the back slope of this hill that looked like it was the hill that I went up. And I spotted some things I could identify, and I assured everybody that we were here. So we started up the backside in single file, and all of the sudden I saw these figures coming down past us going to the rear. So I grabbed this, and I knew they were South Koreans, and I wondered what the devil was going on, so I sent my Korean interpreter over to interrogate one of these guys. He came back and said that they wouldn't stop and indicated that they were South Koreans from the Capital Division who were leaving prematurely, shall we say. Then we found out why all of a sudden, because they, apparently the Chinese, had become suspicious and they had sent out some patrols. And one of the patrols they had sent out was to Hill 59. They came on up 59; the South Koreans saw them coming and decided, well, we're going home anyway. Why stay here and get into a fight? So they picked up their gear and they came down the hill and the top of the hill was totally unoccupied until the Chinese got there. Then the Chinese spotted us coming up and they opened up with this burp [submachine] gun on us, and we were caught in single file. It was kind of a frightening situation there for a second, and I really wasn't as frightened as I was mad about what had happened. I immediately issued the shortest five-paragraph combat order of my life, which was simply, "Let's go!" But by then, you know, you didn't have to give orders. It was like the thing was in your hand. The platoon had worked together; we had trained together very vigorously over there in Tripoli, and everybody knew what to do. It was like a well-oiled machine. The thumb didn't have to look over to see what the pinky was doing. The fingers of the hand all worked and it was with very little direction. So everybody moved up the hill smartly, dropped our gear, and went up the hill. The Chinese, there wasn't any use for them to stay; they had found out what they needed to know, and they hightailed it back down the hill. I think we had two guys wounded in that initial burst of fire and nobody in the assault.

We took the position [and] occupied it; everybody took their sector, and then I gave the word for one man out of each fire team to go

back down and pick up three or four packs and bring them back up and put them in a dump outside the CP and we would get the things sorted in the dark from the central dump. Well, they went back down there, and the South Koreans didn't have time to stay and fight the Chinese, but they had time to stay and steal our gear. I lost my sleeping bag; I lost my parka; I lost my Mickey Mouse boots because we had stripped down for the hump out to the hill: sleeping bag, my rations, and my binoculars. They just absolutely stripped us. So I tell you, we were up there, and we spent a very, very cold time because the division was still over on the west coast and there was no resupply. So it was miserable. I tell you, I got a bad taste in my mouth for the South Koreans that I have not lost to this day. Everybody tells me how great the South Koreans were, but when you're colored by an experience like that, maybe it's just as well that I never had to soldier with them again, because I never held them in very high regard as a result of that experience.

Now, over on the right flank, all I could hear was the "whoomp, whoomp, whoomp, whoomp" of mortars coming into the low ground, and I realized that old Tom was having some problems over there. I made contact on my left with McQuinn who had no difficulty getting in his position but at first light. So I personally went down the right-hand slope down to the tank trap down at the bottom of the hill on the right-hand side, where we were supposed to meet for contact, but there was nothing of Tom's platoon. So I kind of refused my right flank, and we just kind of huddled down and waited for full daylight. Just about dawn, there was kind of an icy fog hanging over the paddies.

Frank:  
Trainor:

I remember that well.

There was no sign of Tom. So I went down again. We were now up on the radio because we could talk. I was told that Tom was down there, but he had taken incoming getting into position, but he was down there. So I went down, and I was down by the tank trap when I hear somebody. It gave me a bit of a scare, because I don't think it was too smart for me to be down there by myself. I didn't take anybody with me, and all I had was my .45[-caliber pistol]. I had left my rifle on the top of the hill. The guy that came around was a Marine by the name of Butterball. I don't recall his last name, his nickname was Butterball. He was a little fat kid, and he was Tom's runner. He was ashen, absolutely ashen. So I contacted him. He was all upset and said they had gotten all sorts of incoming during the night. They had not been able to get into their position; they were, well, short of it, and that Lieutenant Stuart had been wounded.

So he took me back, [to] the, to where the platoon was, and there Tom stood. He had a great big bandage on his jaw and between clenched teeth he was giving orders and sorting things out. I don't know how many casualties they took. But they were in the process of evacuating them. So I told them that I'd take over the platoon for the time being and help get that sorted out. They were well short of the real position. The platoon had dug in and they were later pulled back from there because—back to Hill 229—

because it was totally untenable. So Gross had won his argument but Stuart and his platoon had paid for it.

We stayed up there on 59 and we got a couple of probes on that hill. I guess we stayed up there about five days, and got some probes; had a couple of fine fights, but generally speaking it was unbelievably quiet. Apparently there was a *modus vivendi* struck between the Chinese and the Capitol Division, because in between our outpost, which was right under Taedok-san, there were houses. There were still some farmers living there, and they were starting to prepare the soil for the spring planting. We patrolled up Taedok-san, if you can believe that!

We patrolled up Taedok-san! Taedok-san was held by the Chinese, but it was held lightly. Of course when we got there, we started to search the slope and the peasants had to get out of the valley. So the Chinese . . . we opened up on them, and they got a little angry and they opened up on us. I remember we had a .50-caliber sniper rifle up on Hill 59, come up from a platoon from the rear, and we could fire into this village-cluster of houses I can still see in my mind's eye, which was a mile away I guess. And they'd come out to the well to get water and that's when the guy on the .50 would try to nail these guys—fire the .50 with a tracer going out. I don't know if he ever hit anything or not.

But they were probing us and finally the rest of the division, now, started to move over. Nobody, in the meantime, was on the MLR. The 1st Marines came over, 1st Battalion went out on this OPLR that was it for the defense. That's why there was such concern about what the Chinese might do. But then when we managed to get in the MLR, it then became 229, but eventually all those were overrun. The one that I was on—Hill 59—was overrun about two days after we came off that hill. That's what the probes were for. It was so close to Taedok-san, the Chinese could not tolerate having it there.

Frank: When you got up on the lines, did you get any loudspeaker broadcasts—"Welcome to the 1st Marines"?

Trainor: No, we had none of that.

Frank: We had some of that later.

Trainor: That may have come later.

Frank: They used to leave Christmas gifts, little packages of the Picasso peace doves on handkerchiefs and little packages of candy and some propaganda and so on.

Trainor: Well, we got the broadcasts later on. When we first moved over there, I don't think the Chinese knew that it was Marines who were there, or if they did, they didn't give any indication of it. It looked like we kind of caught them cold out there.

So we came off the outpost line, then, and were able to get some gear: sleeping bags and parkas and so forth. Then I remember the Corps commander was O'Daniel.

Frank: Iron Mike O'Daniel.

Trainor: Iron Mike O'Daniel, and I guess the phrase was "sharpening your bayonets," or something like that. I'll never forget my disrespectful bunch of baboons. Iron Mike O'Daniel came up to visit us, and it was the day after we had come off the OPLR. It rained and sleeted all night long, and we were kind of miserable. We were out in the open stacked behind 229. We still hadn't gotten all of our gear and spent another miserable night, and everybody was just about rung out from the cold and the tension and everything else: the minor firefights that we had, the lack of food, and the lack of sleep. O'Daniel came up and it was the first time I had ever seen him with the fancy cravat.

Frank: Scarf, yes.

Trainor: And the perfectly tailored uniform and the shellacked helmet and carrying a swagger stick. It looked like such ludicrous ostentation that I just shook my head. Then I started to worry about the U.S. Army and some of their unusual characteristics from a Marine standpoint. All of my guys had taken Ka-Bar [combat knives] and those that had bayonets were assiduously sharpening them as Iron Mike O'Daniel came up. I don't know whether he ever got the significance or the irony of the whole thing. If he did, he passed it off graciously and pretended to be very impressed by the fighting spirit of the Marines. So we then . . .

Frank: How did you feel, now that you'd been bloodied, a lot more comfortable as a platoon leader?

Trainor: Oh, yes, yes. I was in my element at that point. I felt very comfortable about it.

Frank: Got to know the men a little bit better?

Trainor: Yes. By this time we were a pretty tight crew. We then went out on Hill 104 for our next outpost duty. Now, this was a little hill called—I believe it became one of the most famous outposts that was overrun and raided . . .

Frank: Reno, Carson, or Vegas?

Trainor: Oh, yes, but see, we never had those names. This was all before those names. We knew them either by their map name or by their height. This was Hill 104, and it was Taedoc-san. If I was shown a map, I'd be able to identify it. But it was like a horseshoe, and we were very close to the Chinese line. And it would slant back and forth. As a matter of fact, one of our snipers got shot through the elbow. As he was drawing a bead on some guy, someone was drawing a bead on him and shot him. It went down the arm and came out the elbow. So we went up on another outpost and then we would run patrol and ambushes there. Oddly enough, with all the mines that were supposedly around there, we didn't take a mine casualty in that particular outpost. I forget how long we were out there, but we got our ration of shelling. We were probed once on that hill.

Frank: Did you have "Box me in"?

Trainor: Yes. We had the regular drill; we had the sound-powered phone that went back; you had the radio; and then you had pyrotechnics. You had the signal for "Fire a normal barrage," and then a "Box me in," and a "VT [variable time (fuse)] my position." So you were prepared for just about



anything. If they got up on your position, you would have lost your ability to organize and defend, then everybody knew the name of the game and you could call VT on the position. If somebody was caught outside that was just tough luck. I never had to call “VT my position.” I did call a “Box me in,” but never “VT my position.”

Then, well, we did a lot of patrolling and ambushing there. Frequently we got ambushed ourselves. There was no waiting at that particular point. Then we came back off on holy Saturday night of 1952. We came off Hill 104 and went to an intermediate position. We moved off at night and onto this hill. It was just raining to beat the band, and Wagner and I went into an old bunker that had been a Korean bunker—north or south, I don’t know which. But they used to build their bunkers very well, with straw overhead insulation, and then they would build underneath—dig under the bunker—and they would keep charcoal fires under there and that would keep the little hooch warm. They were the masters at that sort of thing.

Frank: Well, they were masters; the Asians were masters of the ground, the terrain. They developed it.

Trainor: And camouflage.

Frank: And camouflage.

Trainor: So we were in there and when water flowed in from the trench line, we would kind of tuck ourselves up along the edge of the bunker. There were rats in the straw running overhead. In the middle of the night, I had to go out and take a leak, which I did. And when I came back in, much of the bunker, which was just enough for two people, was under water. So we were kind of sleeping up along the edges, reasonably dry. And I climbed back into the [laughs] into the sleeping bag, and this rat [laughs] had apparently fallen off of the top and found it was warm and crawled in there. He wanted to get out of there, and I wanted to get out of there, and the two of us tried to get out of the sleeping bag. And I’m screaming and yelling and I rolled into the water. Wagner thinks that we’re under attack, and he’s trying to get up. So it was an exciting couple of minutes there. I didn’t sleep the rest of the night.

So Easter Sunday dawned very nicely, and we came back into the main lines again and got some rest. Then we didn’t go back out on outpost duty. We went over to the right of the line and went on the end of the main line. Up around Hill 129, which was the second hill to the left of what was known as “The Hook.”

Frank: Oh, yes.

Trainor: And B Company was on The Hook. [Captain William G.] “Bill” Joslyn had B Company. Then the next hill over was McQuinn. He had Hill 110. I had Hill 129, and Tom Stuart had a hill behind us, so we had two platoons up and one back. I tied in with 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, on my left. That was an interesting area. We relieved the Commonwealth Division there.

Frank: Yes, the Commonwealth was up on The Hook before.

Trainer: Yes, yes, and I took over from a Major McKay who had been on Hill 129, and the Brits [British] had a strong point defense whereas we had a linear defense. So we had to totally redig the lines so that we had a connecting line trench like World War II. You know, in retrospect, their defensive concept was much sounder than ours. We were too obvious. But the Brits, whether they were the Canadians who we relieved or the others that had been there before, I don't know, were not very clean. There were feces in the trench line and in the bunkers and the ends of rations and all this. It was a pretty filthy position, so we spent a lot of time policing the area. Then we ran a lot of patrols through there. By now, the Chinese had realized that the war had changed and the Marines were there and not the ROKs and not the Brits. So we really got ourselves a war going. That's when the raids started to come in and the snatch operations, very serious patrolling and ambushing and then the artillery—the artillery shooting back and forth at one another. We had two particular Chinese batteries that apparently were dug into caves so it was awfully hard to hit them. We had two in particular that were sighted on Hill 129. One took eight seconds and one took 11 and a half seconds from Hill 122. And whenever a gun on the front would be firing, you could recognize these two batteries, and everybody pretty much froze and then ducked down just before things hit. But we also had three tanks on my position and they used to draw a lot of fire.

Frank: Were they in hull defilade [fortification]?

Trainer: They were in hull defilade, right, and the fact is that they were just plain, everyday tanks, but they drew fire with some frequency. But there were compensations because when they'd resupply the tanks, they'd usually bring them up fresh potatoes and onions and things of this nature, which the tankers would share with us. So that was the sort of war there. We would go out on raids. And the Chinese were trying to move up onto The Hook although they weren't particularly successful at that point. They did take Pip Hill, which was one of the hills that were sort of up on the actual Hook. But that was taken back. So it was a kind of a replay of World War I at that particular time.

This is when Wagner was killed. We were going out on a patrol, and it was difficult because people were going through the wire, and the point was ambushed just outside our wire. There was a firefight and Wagner caught one below his flak jacket. I guess the Chinaman was lying down and hiding with a burp gun and hit him with three bullets just below the jacket. He was killed immediately. The two of us, for such a strange start, at least on my part, had really become very, very close—very close. So I was very saddened by his death.

Shortly after that, I came down to become the assistant 3 to Sandy McLeod [?], who was the S-3 and a very, very fine professional soldier—a mustang—and a very fine S-3. So I spent the rest of my tour, then, as the assistant 3, both to Mcleod and then to [Major] John K. Hogan, who came to be the S-3 and later executive officer. For a short time, I

commanded Weapons Company. I think that was for about a week or 10 days or something of this nature. Generally speaking, I considered my tour with 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, a success and my bloodying in Korea a success. I thought more highly, I think, of John Gorman than John Papurca. John Papurca was a good man and a good battalion commander, but he was not the spectacular sort of battalion commander that Gorman was. One thing soured me on that. I have to tell you this and it's a lesson that I learned. I had a lull during all the artillery thumping [and] had some casualties, one of which was a guy with a sucking chest wound. We had patched him up, and Papurca came up to the position. He was always nicely dressed and his uniform was always clean. They had bath and shower units in the rear, and things had settled down. It [was] different than the east coast. You could move around a lot easier; you weren't as isolated. But anyway, Papurca came up and he had his camera and he photographed this kid who was lying there with a sucking chest wound. And I thought that was really bad form on the part of the battalion commander, and it soured me on Papurca, frankly. So that may have colored my view.

I thought our leadership was great at the time, but when I look back on it now, after a long profession, it was really stupid. We fought the war very poorly. It was an artillery war at that phase, and we were throwing people against artillery and automatic weapons. We just couldn't afford to do that. It was a poorly executed war, a rerun of World War I. The senior officers that I held as heroes at the time I have considerably less respect for now. They just didn't understand what they were doing. They were throwing flesh against metal. They hadn't learned anything from World War I. And I guess it was a World War II mentality. By God, when Marines take a position, we don't back them off. We lost a lot of good people on raids, on counterattacks, on defending positions that were useless. I guess I learned and this influenced me. Maybe some of my best learning in the Marine Corps has come from negative lessons. Whatever success crowned my efforts in my career, particularly in a tactical sense and in combat I think, may be the result of the bad lessons that I have seen others give me, and I was determined I would not make stupid mistakes like that again.

So I finished up my tour, then, as the assistant S-3 with the 1st Marines—1st Battalion, 1st Marines—and then went back to the states in the fall of '52 and went down to the 2d Division.

Frank: You did go to the 2d Division. I had down that you were up here at Headquarters for about a week or two.

Trainer: Yes. When I came back, I had orders to go to Photo Interpretation School over in Anacostia [in Washington, DC]. I went over there, and I didn't have the requisite acuity in depth perception. I was nearsighted in one eye and farsighted in the other. Although I didn't wear glasses at the time, the condition was there and that didn't give me the degree of stereoscopic vision that was necessary for a photo interpreter. It was probably the

greatest thing, because I didn't want to go to the school anyway. So this was a very convenient excuse. So I went down, then, to the 2d Division and became the assistant 3 in the 8th Marines. At that time they were on a TraEx [training exercise] down in the Caribbean, the 8th Marines. I joined them after checking in down there. That's where I ran into Tom Stuart.

Then we have a postscript here that I should have mentioned earlier. Tom recovered from his wound and . . .

Frank: He had a jaw wound—wasn't it?

Trainor: Yes, the jaw was broken. It had to be wired and so forth. But he came back to join the battalion when we were over in that Hook area. And the day he got back up to battalion was the day his brother Jerry was shot and killed out on a patrol. So he never came forward of the battalion. He took the body back home.

So I hadn't seen Tom until I got down to Vieques, [Puerto Rico,] and he was in the 8th Marines. We had a little reunion; sat on the side of a hill and drank some brandy that night. At that time [??] John [E.] Greenwood, presently managing editor of the [*Marine Corps*] *Gazette*, he was the assistant 3, and I became his relief in the 3 shop. [Major Anthony J.] "Tony" Castagna was the 3. The two Masters brothers—[Colonel] John [H. Masters] and [Colonel James M.] "Jim" [Masters]—were the regimental commanders. [Colonel] DeWolf Schatzel and [Lieutenant Colonel Edward H.] E. "Hunter" Hurst were executive officers. So [cross talk] it was a class regiment, I'll tell you.

Frank: I'll say so! Dutch Schatzel, one of the finest Marines, the Masters brother, "Smiling Cobra," and Hunter Hurst.

Trainor: Yes, now E. Hunter Hurst kind of became my hero and my mentor. I respected him enormously and he kind of treated me like a son. Our association is still close and friendly. Tony Castagna, who was the 3, was professionally competent. I think my judgment of him was that he was always trying to look good. So I didn't have the respect for him that I had for E. Hunter Hurst. Hunter Hurst still has my respect to this day.

Enough for today?

Frank: Yes, that would be a good place to stop. We'll get into—let's see—[Second Lieutenant Herbert M.] "Herb" Hart was in the 7th SBC wasn't he?

Trainor: No, 9th.

Frank: [The] 9th, with you?

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: Okay, and of course when you came back to Washington later on, you and he were roommates.

Trainor: [In] '55, right.

Frank: Yes, you were out chasing skirts and everything together.

Trainor: Well, yes, we did a few things like that, and managed to catch two of them as a matter of fact.

Frank: Yes. [Laughter] Okay, great. I think this is a good place to stop.

Trainor: All right.

Frank: But you were blooded as a young boot lieutenant.  
Trainor: Yes.  
Frank: And it was a good experience.  
Trainor: Oh, yes. No question about it.  
Frank: Well, I think what you said is absolutely valid. The Marines, in a static war, you had a whole generation of people who had to be retaught after Korea. It wasn't until the end there, when I got there, that they were able to take regiments down and go through amphibious training exercises on the south and on the west coast.  
Trainor: Yes, it was a replay of World War I with the same mentality.  
Frank: Yes. Okay, fine, good place to stop.  
Trainor: All right.

End SESSION II

## U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lieutenant General Bernard E. "Mick" Trainor, USMC (Ret)  
Interviewer: Mr. Benis M. Frank  
Place: Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, DC  
Date: 23 December 1985

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### SESSION III

Frank: Before going on to the chronological record, you want to go back to a couple of things on Korea.

Trainor: Yes. On reflecting back, one thing that was in the spring of 1952, we received our first draftees. I remember the first group; I received a group of five. In the five were the first two blacks I had ever seen in the Corps. I recall their names La Boy and La Baron; one was a big fellow, and one was a little fellow. There was no problem at all; they just joined one of the squads. I don't recall anything spectacular one way or the other about them after that.

We also received a young fellow by the name of Kadagianis, a Greek, whom I remember fondly because he had size 13 feet. While size 13 may not be too large today, in those days it was gigantic. One day, his bunker was hit by a near miss and it knocked over the Coleman lantern inside it and burned up everything including his boondocker [boots]. They were not in the supply system in Korea; they had to go back on a special order to Japan. So Kadagianis was one of the few Marines stomping around the hills of Korea in the spring of 1952 wearing shower clogs.

Frank: Oh, gee!

Trainor: He was an interesting fellow. He was married, and I think he had two children. How the hell he ever ended up in a rifle company, I don't know.

Then we had a young fellow by the name of Garcia who was Puerto Rican. He was not an asset because he couldn't speak much English. He was scared to death of authority, and he would say, "Yes," to anything he was asked, if he thought that was the answer that was wanted. You could ask him if the moon was made of blue cheese, and if he thought you wanted it to be blue cheese, he'd say, "Yes." So a guy like that wasn't very good when you were debriefing him after a patrol. We got rid of him in a fashion. We got a call from the company first sergeant trying to provide somebody to go to the rear to one of the support jobs. Colonel [John] Papurca needed a driver, so, knowing that Garcia would say "Yes" to any question asked, we asked Garcia if he knew how to drive, and he said, "Yes." So we sent Garcia back to the rear, and I think the first time he got in the jeep he ran into a tent pole or something. He didn't last long, as a driver, but we never got him back in the platoon.

Then I had a strange fellow, who had been drafted from the [U.S.] Merchant Marine, who came equipped with a German helmet and German

jack boots that he told me he had gotten from a girlfriend that he knew in Germany and whose brother had been in the Afrika Korps. These belonged to him. The brother was killed while serving in the Afrika Korps. Now, we could never quite connect how, if the guy was killed in the Afrika Korps, she ever got the helmet and the boots. So we had him stow those. He didn't wear those in the complex.

But speaking of boots, we had, in that second winter in Korea, the Mickey Mouse boots instead of the summer boots, which were terrific for being in a static situation. However, when the spring came and we took the boots off, our feet were like . . .

Frank: Prunes.

Trainor: Yes, prunes.

Frank: Emersion foot.

Trainor: Yes, and we had to toughen them up. In typical Marine fashion, the way we did that was just get out and hiked around in boondockers until the feet toughened up. It was at just about that time that we started the transition out of the boondockers into these "Army" boots. The first we knew about the long, hightop, black boots was that all the truck drivers—one might expect—all the rear area folks had all the new boots, and we still had boondockers. I hated to see the boondocker go. It was the passing of an era. The boondocker, the canvas legging, the herringbone twill, the utilities were on their way out, and we were moving toward apparel that looked considerable like the U.S. Army. Our distinctive headgear remained with camouflage covers, but even in time the Army decided to adopt the camouflage covers. So the distinctiveness of the U.S. Marines was starting to pass into oblivion.

Frank: Well, that was particularly good during World War II, when combat photos would go back to the States without identifying the unit, but if they had camouflage covers on their helmets, you knew they were Marines, or if they wore camouflage dungarees—I guess they call them utilities these days—not dungarees.

Trainor: Dungarees in those days.

Frank: Of course, those dungarees; I don't know if they had—they must have when you came in—the jacket and the trousers, and there were copper buttons that . . .

Trainor: Yes. I still have one of my herringbone twill jackets with the copper buttons that I use when I'm doing some painting around the house. It's all paint stained. It's still herringbone twill. Now, there was a time we also had a pair of trousers, utility trousers, that had big patch pockets on the side and big patch pockets in the rear, with your poncho.

Frank: With our poncho and you would sit on it.

Trainor: Right. And they were pretty ungainly. Nobody could put those [inaudible] on. But there was nothing sharper than a pair of starched and bleached-white pair of the old herringbone dungarees. They made good-looking Marines.

Frank: Oh, yes. Well, I can remember when I came in, we would wash, starch, and iron our dungarees and our khaki. Those were the days of the square-bottom field scarf.

Trainor: That's right, yes. Yes, the cotton field scarf, and if you got enough starch in it, the thing would stick out.

Frank: That's right.

Trainor: And also, while I was enlisted, they introduced the battle jacket, particularly the khaki battle jacket. That was a nonstarter.

Frank: Yes, the Eisenhower jacket.

Trainor: It was an Eisenhower jacket.

Frank: It was a little earlier than that, Mick. The 1st Division picked it up when they were in Australia.

Trainor: I was speaking of the khaki one.

Frank: Oh, the khaki ones.

Trainor: The khaki one was introduced in the summer of 1946 or the spring of 1947, if I recall.

Frank: Okay.

Trainor: And I think it lasted maybe two years. But you looked somewhat pregnant when you had the thing on. It was cotton khaki and you had to have it starched and it was hot and you were uncomfortable and it just didn't look very good. But I still have some photos when I was in that jacket. Yes, the green one was introduced toward the end of World War II and . . .

Frank: No, earlier, earlier. It would be '43 when the division was in Australia.

Trainor: Oh, was it?

Frank: Yes, that's when they wore it. They got the . . .

Trainor: I knew when they went into China they wore it.

Frank: Yes, we had them in China. When I got my first issue of officer uniforms, I had one; as a matter of fact, I still have it. It fits my son; it would never fit me.

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: Okay, what else about Korea?

Trainor: Well, that was just the couple of points that I thought of later on that are not of any historical significance, but anecdotal.

Frank: The two black Marines; you never tracked them down to see how they made out after that at all?

Trainor: They performed well. The first night they were on the line when the McQuinn platoon got probed. Of course, we were on alert, and you could see these two hills. Illumination would be fired out there, and I could see his (McQuinn's) position and we were trying to pick up some of the Chinese from our position. I remember going down the trench line [laughs] and here were the two black Marines huddled together. Their eyes were so wide; they were scared to death. Of course, it's kind of a natural reaction the first night on the line for anybody. These two guys were huddling together, and they wondered what the hell they were supposed to do.

Frank: Oh, you didn't break them up?



Trainor: No, no, we didn't. We left the two of them in the same squad. They weren't in the same fire team, though, but they were in the same squad. I don't remember if there was any particular purpose to that. I think we just filled in the spots.

That hill I was mentioning the last time—that I couldn't recall—was called Ungok.

Frank: Oh, right. Yes.

Trainor: Later, it became very bitterly contested on both sides.

Frank: That was right opposite The Hook.

Trainor: It was to the left of The Hook as you looked at the Chinese line, and it was in the form of a horseshoe with the open end toward our line.

Frank: To the west.

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: Now, you got back to the states in September and were assigned to the 8th Marines. That was strictly an exercise type of thing.

Trainor: Well, no; I was assigned to the 8th Marines, and I went in as the assistant 3. John Greenwood was the other assistant 3, and I was relieving him. Tony Castagna was the 3. I think in the last session I mentioned the battery of heavy hitters that constituted the command of the 8th Marines with Schatzel [unintelligible].

Shortly after I joined them, I went down to Vieques. They were already down there on a training exercise called TraEx. I joined the G-3 section of the TraEx staff from the 8th Marines. So while I was down in Vieques, I was not actually with the 8th—I was with the G-3 of the TraEx. [Lieutenant Colonel William E.] "Bill" Benedict was the guy who was the G-3. He was a colorful character from World War II.

Frank: Yes. He was still on active duty?

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: Lieutenant colonel—he never made colonel.

Trainor: That's correct, yes. He was one of the most special Marines I've ever met. He knew his amphibious business better than anybody I've ever known.

Frank: He, ah well, I'll tell you about him later. He ran afoul of Lewis [A.] Jones on Okinawa, [Japan,] but he fought his [inaudible]. He had his battalion all through World War II. He kept it in the 5th Marines. He had a good reputation.

Trainor: When it came to amphibious ops [operations], I learned more from that man. I was very lucky; I had some pretty good mentors there—E. Hunter Hurst in the 8th Marines and then Bill Benedict, who taught me proper staff work, amphibious staff work, lessons that I've never forgotten. Tony Castagna was good, although I never held him in the highest esteem. I thought he was self-serving. But he certainly was professional.

One of the incidents I remember down in Vieques and one that, as a matter of fact, I alluded to in my retirement ceremony when I made my remarks upon retirement. One of the great characteristics of the Marine Corps is its sense of devotion to reality, occurred when we were down there. Erskine was the CG, FMFLant—"the Big E"—and he was big for

troop information. The troops always had to know what they were doing and why they were doing it. That way they would perform. He had gone to visit the TraEx and went out into the bush to observe. Everybody kind of held their breath when the Big E was around. Out on the slopes of a sunbaked hill, he came upon a Marine and he said to him, "What's your job?" And the kid told him that he was a rifleman. He said, "Where's your fire team leader?" And the youngster pointed to some rocks and said, "My fire team leader is behind those rocks, sir." And he said, "And where's your squad leader?" He said, "My squad leader's further over, behind that cactus patch." The Big E was really pleased that this kid seemed to know what it was all about, and he said, "Your job is what, here?" And he said, "I'm covering the flank." He said, "Well, what are your instructions?" He said, "My instructions are to hold this position." The Big E said to him, "And why are you to hold this position?" And the kid looked up at him as said, "Because the gunny will kick my a——s if I leave it." [Laughter]

I thought that was just typical of the Marines at the time. As a matter of fact, when I look back over my career, Ben, the Marines aren't much different today than they were then. You know, they're still hell-raising young kids that we get. You give them good leadership and they'll do anything that you ask them to do. You give them bad leadership, and they'll turn sour. But that was a kid then.

I spent a relatively short time at the 8th Marines. When we came back to Camp Lejeune, I received orders to go to sea duty. That was in the spring of '53.

I was sent up to Portsmouth, Virginia, to go through "Sea School." Sea School was headed by an old friend of mine and a Basic School classmate by the name of [First Lieutenant William W.] "Bill" Breninghouse. Bill was the sort of guy on whom you had to issue a Form-734 to go on liberty, so that somebody would be responsible for him. He was the last guy to ever run a spit-and-polish sea school. Well, what it turned out to be was really just a holding pattern for us before we went aboard ship. The barracks was headed by a colonel by the name of Karl [K.] Louther. Old Karl Louther was an alcoholic, and . . .

Frank: He'd been fired in Okinawa.

Trainor: Had he?

Frank: Yes. I think he was the executive officer of the 22d Marines.

Trainor: Well, he was a character. One night some sailors came down, drunk, back onto the base, and I guess they'd bet one another they could climb the flagpole in front of the Marine barracks, which was a very impressive building. They got up the flagpole, and one got smart and came down. The other guy got to the yardarm, and suddenly froze up in a kind of panic. They called out the guard and called the fire department. This is about, oh, maybe 0100 in the morning. In the middle of all this excitement, running across the parade field, is Karl Louther in his pajamas, from his quarters. He comes over, and he obviously had had too much to drink, and he starts to climb up the flagpole to rescue this guy. [Laughing] Just then, another

figure in nightclothes appears running on the parade field, and she's yelling, "Karl, get down off that flagpole!" His wife! [Laughter] There were some characters at the Marine barracks in those days. They had a saluting battery there at the barracks that, periodically, somebody would fill up with golf balls. When they fired the 0800 gun, the golf balls would go spewing all over downtown Portsmouth. But, we waited there at the Sea School. It was kind of fun, you know. I was a bachelor, and you would just check in, in the morning and then take off and go down to Virginia Beach and have a hell of a good time.

Frank: Well, you went through the naval gunfire course.

Trainor: That's right; I went through a gunfire spot course. I had forgotten all about that. Yes. That was a good course. I think it was the M32 course or something like that over at [Naval Amphibious Base] Little Creek, [Virginia].

Frank: That course was being conducted down there?

Trainor: Yes. It was conducted at Little Creek, and we went for a couple of weeks. Those of us who were going on sea duty, who were going to gunships as opposed to carriers, went through the spotter school because we would be, as a secondary duty aboard ship, gunfire spotters, and we drew flight pay for this, as a matter of fact, while we were on sea duty. In the years I was on sea duty, I was in flight status. It was a good course, and then they took us off to the Solomon Islands for a kind of graduation exercise where we actually did some live gunfire spotting for a DD [destroyer ship] from a [Martin] PBM [Mariner patrol bomber]. Then, I guess it was June, I left and went up to Boston and reported aboard the USS *Columbus* (CA 74), at that time commanded by a [Navy] captain, who had two Navy Crosses from World War II, by the name of Luther K. Reynolds. He was a very, very fine officer. Unfortunately, he had a drinking problem also. But he was a splendid, splendid skipper. The executive officer was a man by the name of Gibbs, who was the most immaculately dressed naval officer; a very elegant gentleman, and one of those fellows who thought that he was going to be CNO [chief of naval operations] by a matter of birthright. He never did make CNO; I'm not even sure he made captain. But he was a very fine seaman and leader.

*Columbus* was a good ship. It was a happy ship, and of course it was a tremendous ship for me because I had served in it as a midshipman. Our homeport was Boston, and me, being a Holy Cross graduate from Worcester, [Massachusetts,] of course, I had a lot of friends up there. So it was like old home week.

Frank: Scollay Square and Durgin Park.

Trainor: Oh, yes. Durgin Park.

Frank: Fanieul Hall.

Trainor: Yes, all fine eating places up there, Jake Wirth's Lukeobers. It was a good social time, and I enjoyed the tour with the Navy and made a lot of close friends. I still am in touch with many of them. I came to understand, if not to love, the Navy. They're an odd breed of cat, but then again, anybody

who spends a career in the Navy—30 years of 1 on and 3 off or 4 and 8—is bound to be a little flaky. They had unusual ways of doing things, but the skippers that we had were good. Then we had a fellow by the name of Robert Morton who relieved Gibbs. Robert Morton looked like a popular television character at the time—Mister Peepers. So he was affectionately known, behind his back by officers and crew, as Mister Peepers.

Frank: A rather meek, mild man?

Trainor: No, he wasn't meek and mild; he just looked like Mister Peepers, but he was an overbearing little martinet. He just absolutely harassed everybody. He was absolutely detested by all. But I'll save some of the stories about Morton [for] when I write my memoirs. Suffice it to say that when I do write my memoirs, the thickest chapter will probably be about life at sea because of some of the funny things that occurred. They probably were only funny to a Marine, because we were able to stand back and look at some of the idiosyncrasies of our brethren in blue, and they really are ludicrous.

But we made tours down to, of course, the Caribbean and out to the Med [Mediterranean]. They were great deployments. In those days in the Mediterranean liberty was nothing but spectacular. It was the days of tight dress code. You had to go to shore, as an officer, in coat and tie and hat. Everybody had to have a hat. That made the Borsalino [hat] very popular, because you'd leave the quarterdeck wearing the Borsalino and the minute you got ashore you could just roll the thing up and shove it in your pocket, and you wouldn't put it back on your head until you reboarded the ship that evening. We had ComCruDiv 6 [commander Cruiser Division 6], carried his flag in the *Columbus*, and that was [Rear] Admiral Arleigh [A.] Burke. He was a marvelous guy. He was a father figure to all of us.

One of the idiosyncrasies though was uniforms; we were changing uniforms, and I recall in October of '54 we pulled into Algiers, [Algeria]. The weather was just at that turning point and it could either be summer uniform or winter uniform, and you'd be probably comfortable in either one of them. The uniform, in fact, entering port in Algiers was blues. We manned the rails and passed by the French fort at the entrance to Algiers and the tricolor over the flag. And there was an exchange of gun salutes, and we finally pulled in and tied up at the pier and set the in-port watch. You know, everybody secures from quarters. I was just standing there on the quarterdeck in my dress blues when the admiral's sea cabin opened and out stepped Arleigh Burke, and he was in khaki. He looked around, saw everybody else was in blues, and stepped back into the cabin. I thought, now, one of two things is going to happen. Either he's going to get in his blues, or else this entire ship is going to change back into summer uniform. Well, it wasn't two or three seconds later that the 1MC [1 main circuit] sounded and throughout the ship we were all informed that the uniform had been changed to summer service. This was, again, typical of the Navy.

I had the privilege and the honor and the opportunity of being the airborne spotter for the entire [U.S.] Sixth Fleet, as a matter of fact, two Sixth Fleets because it was during the turnover period. Prior to that we had a range called Porto Escudo [?]. The ships were in the firing range there, and we had two battleships, two cruisers, a bevy of destroyers, and I would take off in a helicopter at first light. We would try and shoot the regular course for each of the ships. I did a lot of gunfire spotting; [it was] terrific. I can just spot anything; it's second nature for me. I can call naval gunfire or artillery practically without even using a set of binoculars—great training for a young Marine.

Frank: Did you use choppers?

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: And spotting planes?

Trainor: We used choppers—choppers for it. The choppers would go aboard ship when the ship was deployed to the Med. In fact, stateside, we didn't have the choppers on board. But it always was two choppers. We had landing party drills. We had great training down in places like [Naval Station] Guantanamo Bay, [Cuba]. I'd take the detachment off, and we'd go out in the woods. Those were the pre-[Fidel] Castro days. The Marines also manned the secondary batteries: 3-inch [rocket], .50[-caliber guns], anti-aircraft batteries. If I wasn't doing spotting, my job was to be the assistant air defense officer.

Frank: From the sky?

Trainor: From sky forward, right behind the bridge.

Frank: Did you go all the way up that [inaudible]?

Trainor: Yes, right. We had Mark 56 [ship gun fire control system] directors on the forward portion of the ship. I enjoyed sea duty. Again, I was a bachelor, so it was terrific. Oh, we had a very interesting but unfortunate thing. I had the honor, onboard, as the junior officer. The fellow who was the skipper of the detachment was a captain by the name of Roy [H.] Miller, who was a Naval Academy graduate—a splendid officer. I had a great deal of respect for him. Unfortunately, he got in with some bad company. Before he had become the CO of the Marine det, he was stationed down someplace in the Washington area, and he got himself totally in debt. He was trying to work his way out of it. Well, unfortunately he was working his way out of it by borrowing on the Bank of Scranton, which allowed loans and credit to Naval Academy graduates on their signature only. His problem was he had used several different signatures to get the loans to pay back the debts that he had and was, in fact, repaying the debts under the phony names to the Bank of Scranton; names of his classmates, who did not have accounts at Scranton, but he opened the accounts for them. Actually he was working his way out of this, and the bank came upon it by accident and investigated and had Roy arrested.

I'll never forget it. At the time, I had the detachment up at Wakefield, Massachusetts, on the National Guard rifle range, firing at the range. A hurricane came through Massachusetts and the telephone lines

were down and so forth, and a state of emergency had been called in Massachusetts. On top of that, [Joseph] “Specs” O’Keefe, a notorious criminal, had escaped from the Charles [Street] city jail [in Boston, Massachusetts]. I got a roundabout message that Roy Miller had been arrested and was in the Charles city jail, and I’d better get back down to Boston and to the ship immediately. Well, that was something; trying to get down to a ravaged area of New England; the National Guard stopping all vehicles, and then getting down to the Charles Street Jail where Specs just escaped from and where Roy was being held and going in there. The police were all agitated. I had a terrible time talking my way in and finally getting to see Roy. He was in uniform. The FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] had literally come aboard the ship and taken him off while he was on duty. He had taken off all his buttons and taken off his ribbons emblem, totally disgraced, and very, very low. We got him a lawyer but he was sentenced to a year in Lewisburg [U.S.] penitentiary.

I kept track of Roy. He came out of jail; I saw him when he came out, still pretty sympathetic to him. He moved out to Milwaukee, [Wisconsin,] got a job at Sears and Roebuck and seemed to be on his way back up. Then I got, through the grapevine, the fact that he had committed suicide. I never knew why; I never knew the circumstances. But it was unfortunate.

But at any rate, when this happened to Roy, I became CO of the detachment, and of course, I commanded that until I was relieved in 1955. Then I went down to Headquarters Marine Corps into the Personnel Department.

Frank: No more sea duty. I think this period is about the last, really, era of sea-going Marines, when we still had the capital ships as combatants. What type of individual was assigned to sea duty? You know, there was the reputation, early on (pre-World War II), where you had gentlemen rankers. A lot of the people who were enlisted in sea duty before World War II wound up with commissions, as a matter of fact. They were quality people. You’re too young to remember this, but there was a movie—*To the Shores of Tripoli* . . .

Trainor: Oh, yes, sure . . .

Frank: With Maureen O’Hara.

Trainor: Sure, yes.

Frank: John Wayne, Randolph Scott, and [Max] “Slapsy Maxie” Rosenbloom.

Trainor: Sure, I remember.

Frank: And nothing would do but you had to . . . if you didn’t go sea-going you weren’t anything.

Trainor: Um hmm, and you had the sea-going dip in your hat.

Frank: Oh, yes, yes.

Trainor: Well, no, I think that we probably had the cut-above-average guy in the detachment. I wouldn’t say they’re not like the [Marine] Security Guard today and probably not even like the guys that are on sea duty today, because the duties at sea are mostly the nuclear security aspects, and you

really have to have a high-quality guy. But we had a very high quality. As a matter of fact, one of the guys in our detachment recently retired as a lieutenant colonel out at NAS Brunswick, [Maine]. He had [the] Marine Barracks Brunswick; a young fellow by the name of Carr who came aboard ship as a private.

We had a young black come aboard ship who, as a matter of fact, as far as I know, was the first black to go on sea duty—a young fellow by the name of Joe Thurman, who was a skinny little black with one walleye. . . . But Joe Thurman turned out to be one hell of a good Marine, and he went on and got commissioned. As you recall, during the race riots that the Marines were having in the early '70s—late '69, early '70s—remember out at Camp Pendleton?

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: There was Joe Thurman, who at that time was a warrant officer, who was ordered in there and finally got that thing squared away. I kept in touch with Joe Thurman throughout our careers. The last time I saw him was when I came back from my second tour in Vietnam, and he lived out in California. It's only been within the last two years we've lost touch with one another. I don't know whether he's passed away or not; I heard that he had. But Thurman was kind of an exception. He wasn't this strapping, six-foot sort of guy.

Most of the guys that we got were pretty good and pretty representative of Marines. There was keen competition between the Navy and the Marines to compete in such things as gunnery. But Marines always had their sense of humor and relationships were generally good. My relationships with the wardroom were excellent.

Frank: [Lieutenant] General [Hugh M.] Elwood was a field musician on a cruiser, I guess.

Trainor: I didn't know that.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: I later worked for him.

Frank: He was field music on a cruiser, and I think it was [Lieutenant General William J.] Van Ryzin, who was the detachment commander, who sponsored him. Elwood passed the exams for the Naval Academy and the [inaudible] at the Naval Academy. I think it was Van Ryzin, but I'm not sure. This was a year-and-a-half tour?

Trainor: No, it was about two years, Ben.

Frank: Well, February '55 was when you got detached to go to Personnel Department at Headquarters Marine Corps. You were now a captain, I think.

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: What was Headquarters like in those days?

Trainor: Well, at that time, I worked on the fourth deck there in Officer Procurement in the regular program. At that time, Officer Procurement was divided into the three major parts. There was the regular program, which I had and [Captain Herbert L.] "Lloyd" Wilkerson, who later, of

course, became a general officer. And there was the Reserve Officer Procurement, which was by far the largest—that was headed by a guy named [Francis L.] “Frank” Churchville, Major Frank Churchville. That had the Officer Candidate Program, the PLC [Platoon Leaders Class] professional bureaucrat, or a professional O-1, program, and old Churchville was an irascible sort of guy who was a professional bureaucrat or a professional O-1, who really created himself an empire over there at Headquarters. Then there was the third element, which was the Appointment Section. That was headed by an old mustang by the name of [Captain] Lon [F.] Rowlett. Churchville was a mustang, Rowlett, was a mustang, and of course I was regular. I was too junior for the job, really.

Frank: Was Herb at Headquarters at this time? You were rooming together.

Trainor: That’s correct, yes. Herb Hart was with the budding Advertising Section for advertising the officer programs. J. Walter Thompson had become our agent for the publicity, advertising, and things of that nature. They were almost doing it pro bono at that time, and Herb Hart was the interface with them.

I don’t like Headquarters. I took advantage of being in Washington to go to night school. I went over to George Washington [University] to work on my master’s degree. But Headquarters itself was rough. I worked for a tough old bird by the name of Colonel [Albert F.] “Al” Metze.

Frank: Oh, yes. He was a predecessor of yours up at 1st District [?], I believe. He had it.

Trainor: He may have; I don’t recall.

Frank: I think he did.

Trainor: But Metze was a touch hothead, and we clashed on many occasions. Frankly I was about ready to get out of the Marine Corps. All the fun was gone. I was in charge of the NROTC [Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps] program, in charge of all the augmentation programs, the warrant officer program. I wasn’t a very good staff guy, an administrative fellow. Fortunately, I had some fine senior NCOs [noncommissioned officers] working for me. But that was not what I joined the Marine Corps for. I think a guy that helped me over the rough spots was Lieutenant Colonel Oscar [F.] Peatross.

Frank: Oh, sure.

Trainor: Oscar Peatross was the number two guy, and when I would become agitated over my bad relations with Metze (which did get better, I might say) and I’d get so concerned over what I was doing wrong, Peatross . . . I remember one day, he took me over to the window on the fourth deck and looked out on the cemetery, Arlington [National] Cemetery. He said, “Trainor, what do you see over there?” I said, “Well, that’s the cemetery.” He said, “No, Trainor, you know what you’re looking at? You’re looking at the hill of indispensable men.” And anytime thereafter that I thought that the world rose and fell on the effectiveness of my work, I looked at that hill of indispensable men and remembered Peatross’s words. Indeed, years later when I was a three-star general sitting up there on the second



deck looking out over the same graveyard, I frequently thought of that when it all started to close in on me. Peatross was a good guy. He helped keep me in. But I was seriously considering getting out. He kept saying, “This, too, will pass and you’ll get on and do more exciting things.”

Headquarters, in those days . . .

Frank: The fourth deck was hot.

Trainor: The fourth deck was hot. There was no air conditioning, and of course in those days, you had to wear your field scarf all the time. Then you had the woolen shirt, which was warm. And by 1400 on a hot July afternoon, all you could smell was wet wool and body odor from the Marines up on the forth deck. Some days it got so hot and, because there was no insulation, the tar would drip down from the inside, from the roof. It was fierce, but we accepted it. We accepted it, but clearly, it affected our work.

Frank: Sure.

Trainor: You couldn’t help it. At that time, I ran with a group of other bachelors only one of whom was in the Marines. Herb Hart and I and some other civilian friends, and that’s where I met my wife-to-be. We dated for three years, but didn’t get married until I came back from overseas.

Frank: That’s a typical Irish . . .

Trainor: That’s right. I figured, well, there’s no sense in getting married before I was 30. And I didn’t; I was almost 31 when I got married. But I had a set of orders in March of ’58, to go take over the Marine barracks at Bermuda. I thought that was a great place for bachelors.

Frank: As a captain?

Trainor: As a captain, yes. But at that time Metze wouldn’t let me go, because we were in the midst of heavy work—I guess it was the integration program. So I was sorely disappointed. However, it turned out okay because I did get the [British] Royal Marines assignment that summer—in the summer of ’58.

Frank: How did you work that?

Trainor: Well, I didn’t. I had simply put it down on a fitness report and I think really, I think it was probably Metze who called down to personnel because I had lost a good deal in not getting the Barracks in Bermuda. I guess he may have had some influence on my getting a good assignment. Of course, by comparison, the British assignment was definitely better. I’m sure of that.

Frank: Tell me about it. What was it like?

Trainor: Well . . .

Frank: Did you fly over or sail?

Trainor: No, no.

Frank: Sailed over?

Trainor: I sailed over in the SS *United States* [luxury passenger liner], going first cabin. My roommate was another Marine, a colonel, who was going over to NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] Defense School and then for duty at NATO—a man by the name of [Alexander W.] “Al” Gentleman.

Frank: Oh, I know Al Gentleman very well.  
 Trainor: He was a very well-known Marine and a great guy.  
 Frank: My battalion commander in Korea.  
 Trainor: I see. We shared a cabin, and we shared the parties all the way across on the *United States*. It was . . .  
 Frank: Yes, Al likes parties.  
 Trainor: Yes. He married well up in . . . He married a lawyer in New York. He's out of the Marine Corps now, living out in . . .  
 Frank: It's a ranch or something.  
 Trainor: I think he's living out in Nassau County or Suffolk County.  
 Frank: Okay, yes, no, he's gone out to the west at one time I think. That's neither here nor there.  
 Trainor: At any rate, going by ship to Europe in those days was first class. It was partying every night, really the elegant life, classic life. We got to Southampton and took the boat train up to London. Of course, a lot of the people that I'd met on the ship were very, very moneyed people. I was the poor boy from the Bronx with them, but the difference showed when we got to Waterloo [Railway] Station and all these people who have millions in their bank account couldn't get somebody to get their luggage. It was just bedlam at the station. I stepped off the train and there was a Marine sergeant right there to grab my gear and take me in tow and put me in a vehicle and put me on my way. I felt very proud of those Marines as I said, "Ta ta" to all my shipmates.  
 Frank: Were you in uniform when you arrived?  
 Trainor: Yes, yes. I was in uniform. After checking in, we were . . .  
 Frank: Where?  
 Trainor: At North Audley Street, at that time CinCNELM [commander in chief, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe, the East Atlantic, and the Mediterranean], now it's CinCNavEur [commander in chief, U.S. Naval Forces Europe]. It's the same place, 7th North Audley. They've been there, really since World War II. I think that was Eisenhower's . . .  
 Frank: Was FMFEur [Fleet Marine Force, Europe] there, too?  
 Trainor: FMFEur was there, yes. Colonel-then [John C.] Miller . . .  
 Frank: John Miller.  
 Trainor: John Miller was the Fleet Marine officer there. It was right on Grosvenor Square right by the American embassy. [Unintelligible] I checked in there, and the attaché in London at the time was [Lieutenant Colonel Reginald R.] "Reggie" Myers, who had won the . . .  
 Frank: Medal of Honor in Korea.  
 Trainor: . . . Medal of Honor in Korea. He was funny. He was kind of spooky, and he wanted to give me kind of a code to keep in touch with him if the British planned anything. I can remember that the British secretly had pulled off this thing in Suez, [Egypt,] in 1956. Reggie was the attaché at the time, but apparently the attachés had been burned because they didn't have a lot of inside information that should have been available to them. So I was told to keep him informed of any chicaneries if there were any.

Well, I didn't pick up much of that, and I really didn't have any communications with Reggie after I left London. I then met [Major] Stewart [B.] McCarty [Jr.] on the . . .

Frank: Stu McCarty?

Trainor: Yes, and the first thing that he did . . .

Frank: And he was later staff secretary, I believe.

Trainor: That's right.

Frank: And is now retired.

Trainor: He's retired, yes.

Frank: Very elegant colonel.

Trainor: Yes, he really was, and a brilliant fellow. He served effectively in the 2 shop out at EuCom some years later. Elegant, I think is the word for Stewart.

The first thing that I did on this program was to make a tour of the Royal Marine establishment. I spent a few days at each one of them. Well at Deal they had their recruit depot and then down at Portsmouth and then over to Poole and places like that to get a feel for the establishment of the Royal Marines. Then I went to Lympstone and started the program with a staff course called Continuation Course. This was for officers, to prepare Royal Marine officers for promotion exams, which were Army promotion exams, so that they could be eligible for promotion [unintelligible]. It was kind of a cram course. I learned a great deal about the British military ways. It was interesting which was valuable in itself and just the greatest bunch of fellows I've ever met. Guys like Roger Bacon and Dickie Grant, all characters. Most of them never passed the exam, and most of them could care less. They were the typical British officer who was interested in just soldiering and really not career progression.

Frank: With the troops.

Trainor: Just interested in the excitement of the game. Well, I learned a great deal from them. We had a great sense of brotherhood. I still maintain contact with an awful lot of them to this day. They were hell-raisers to be sure. They went off on their way. When I finished that course it was a great way to be introduced into the British system. You learned the British "appreciation," as they call it, as opposed to our "estimate of the situation;" you learned their staff workings and you learned their organization.

When I finished the Continuation Course, I stayed right at Lympstone and commenced the commando course. I went through the course with three Canadians.

Frank: Pretty rugged course?

Trainor: Yes, and one of the Canadians, [Lieutenant General Charles H.] "Charlie" Belzile, is the commanding general of all Canadian ground forces today, a three-star general. A fellow by the name of Schuller who had been in the Hitler Youth during his younger years and came to Canada, I guess at the end of the war. He was in the Princess Patricia's, a Canadian . . .

Frank: Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, PPCLI.

Trainor: Yes, PPCLI. Then there was a fellow by the name of Mike Barr, who was in the RCR, the Royal Canadian Regiment. Mike Barr is still on active duty, as I say is Belzille and Schuller—he's out and [unintelligible]. Well, we were the four foreigners going through training simply put in with the normal lot of enlisted trainees for the commandos.

Now, the commando course is simply part of the progression for a British recruit. At that time, it took them a year to go through what we would call basic training. They would start with Deal at recruit training and work their way through. The commando course was the last step before they went and had sea duty training and finally graduated and went off to RM [Royal Marine] duty.

Frank: All Royal Marines went through the commando course?

Trainor: All Royal Marines, all officer, and enlisted went through the commando course.

Frank: With the exception of band personnel, I guess.

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: But quartermaster personnel do it?

Trainor: Everybody, as far as I know, at that time, went.

Frank: More rugged than our obstacle course and so on?

Trainor: Today, I don't know. I think probably our training is somewhat comparable along the way, not our recruit training, but specialist and to qualify for recon [reconnaissance] and so forth. But it was really tough. It was an eight-week course and all physical to expand beyond what you think you could tolerate in terms of physical stress and stamina and so forth. We used to come back from the training, the four officers—foreigners—at night, and we had batmen. They'd take care of your off duty needs. You'd come back to garrison and have these big British tubs drawn with hot water, and you'd take off your equipment and they would clean it, except I always insisted that I clean my own rifle, but you'd get in these big, big hot tubs and moan and groan at the aches and pains of the day. This was in the fall and early winter, and it's cold and wet and we were constantly cold and wet.

Frank: Like a Quantico winter.

Trainor: Yes, it was like that. And you'd have the speed marches. They'd start out with a two-mile speed march and then up to a three and nine was the highest. I understand that [unintelligible] in Scotland and have a 12 miler—but 9 miles. Then you had what was known as the Scramble Course, and then you had a course, a 35-mile thing that you did across the Dartmoor moors, which was a map-and-compass thing as well, and you practically had to run the entire way. Yes, it was very, very tough training.

Frank: Everyone we sent over there had to be in pretty good condition.

Trainor: Yes, but you know one of the problems was, in the Continuation Course, was those guys did their best to get you out of shape with the constant partying that was taking place every night. But, you know, all Marines survive this thing and live through it. I finished up the commando course in December. Then we had a break. The British stand down three times a

year. They stand down for a couple of weeks at Christmas, a couple of weeks at Easter, and a couple of weeks in the summer time in August. When they stand down, they literally disappear. Everybody goes on leave except the corporal of the guard that remains behind—not a bad system. During this two-week period, I went out skiing to Kitzbuhel, Austria, and had a magnificent time there. I returned from Kitzbuhel and went up to a little place called Aviemore in Scotland, in the Cairngorm Mountains.

Frank: Oh, sure, right on the A-9.

Trainor: Yes. That's where they had their winter warfare course. I did a winter warfare course up there with a group.

Frank: Beautiful. I've been there.

Trainor: Beautiful country. Ben Nevis, one of the highest, I guess was the highest mountain in the British Isles. This was in January, then, of '59.

Frank: And that area there along A-9 and around Pitlochry and so on is where they get heavy, heavy snows.

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: Where the A-9 is completely . . .

Trainor: Snowed under.

Frank: . . . snowed under, yes.

Trainor: I think the British have opened up a ski resort in there since then.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: But they get lots of snow and lots of cold weather. I learned some very fine techniques. Of course, the British, at that time, did not have a designated unit in Norway as they do now. But they were used to cold weather training.

When I finished that, then, I went on down to Malta and joined the 45 Commando, [Royal Marines Guard]. Now, the arrangement that existed, you had the problem of the insurgency in Cyprus at the time with EOKA trying to get control and kick the British out, which they did subsequent to when I was down there. They had the 3d Commando Brigade, which was located in Malta. It was made up of basically two Royal Marine Commandos, 45 and 40 Commando. What they would do was rotate from Malta to Cyprus. When I got there, 45 was on Malta and 40 was in Cyprus. Six months later, they would switch. Then other elements that made up the brigade . . . there was an Army unit—not commando—used to make up the composite brigade.

But I joined the 3d Commando Brigade at St. Patrick's Barracks, and after getting an orientation there and spending some time with the SBS, Special Boat Section—very, very highly trained, highly skilled guys under the tutelage of a fellow by the name of Mick, who was later killed. They got me into scuba diving with the closed circuit set, and we conducted a raid on Gozo Island against some RAF [Royal Air Force] units that were training over there. It was good fun.

After that little bit of training, I went over to the 45 Commando, which was commanded at that time by Lieutenant Colonel [Francis C.] "Billy" Barton, who later became commandant general of the Royal

Marines and who previously had been the Royal Marine that was stationed down at Quantico. So he was very familiar with the Marine Corps and delightful. He and his wife were just naturally delightful. [The] 45 was a great outfit, typically British. You trained hard in the morning, and then you played hard in the afternoon in sports, and then you partied hard that night. I was fortunate. The A Company commander was transferred temporarily to go on one of these sporting matches and A Company was open. So I was assigned as CO of A Troop of 45 Commando and had all the authority, the responsibility, the command including punishment, which is something that a comparable Royal Marine on exchange in the U.S. does not have. But under queen's regulations, I was authorized to hold the British equivalent of office hours.

Frank: Did you have to know the queen's regulations?

Trainer: Yes. Well, I was sort of responsible for knowing them, but of course you have your color sergeant and your number two to give you a hand on it. Naturally, I never made that much use of it, but the point to be made, though, was that under their system a foreigner could be authorized to do this.

In their training, the British were just about amateurs with the helicopter. They looked on the U.S. Marines as being the expert in the use of helicopters, because we had been playing with them. There were a lot of things that they really didn't understand about their use. For example, we had an exercise one time, and the idea was to seize four hills that dominated the key crossroads. The "enemy" army was to parachute into these crossroads and we were to move in to seize the high ground around the crossroads before this took place. We were going to do this by helicopter—make use of the helicopter. It's an uncontested landing; we were getting there before the bad guys. Well, U.S. Marines would have landed the helicopters right on top of the hills and occupied the hills. Not the British; they landed at the bottom and you hump up these giant hills. At the end of the critique, or during the critique, I questioned why we did that, why we just didn't land on top of the hill, and [I] was told that the British soldier, if he didn't have to work hard to occupy a position, he didn't consider the position worth defending. [Laughing]

Another time we were practicing an amphibious operation. A Troop and X Troop was going to be in the first wave. I was supposed to land on the right. [Troop] X, under a guy named Hamish Amsley, was to land on the left. Just before we were boated, the naval gunfire spotting team came up and asked me if they could come into my craft because somebody had forgotten to boat them. Can you imagine—a fundamental requirement like that. Well, we got into the boats and started to head toward the beach, and I suddenly realized that I was on the left and Hamish was on the right, instead of the other way around as it was supposed to be. Well, with a lot of frantic waving we got the thing sorted out and finally landed on the proper beaches. During the critique, I brought up these two particular items, which were severe deficiencies in

the critique. And I'll never forget the brigadier. He fixed me with this baleful look (I think he fancied himself Bernard Montgomery), and he pointed out to me in no uncertain terms that in the British armed forces this is the sort of thing that they expected officers to sort out on the spot. So poor planning would be overcome by officers sorting things out.

But it was a great tour down there. I made good friends, lots of good friends. One of the most significant things was a technique. I wanted to get over to Cyprus, but on the official orders I couldn't because the British were involved in the fighting over there. However, Billy Barton understood my concern, my interest, and my need from a professional standpoint to kind of get a feel for the way they were doing things.

Frank: Sure.

Trainor: So without anybody from the U.S. side knowing it, I was passed off as a native and was able to get over part of the time that 40 Commando was over there. They would go over there and get briefed on the mode of operations and go off on one of their patrols, which were essentially observing in the Troodos Mountains [unintelligible], staying on top of this hill, and just observed any movement within the area and recorded it—didn't do anything about it. Then, I guess they were in there about three or four days, and then we'd come back. They would have various units scattered around doing this sort of thing. The way they worked this thing—it was really brilliant—they had unit intelligence, and they had signal intelligence. They had the Royal Marine patrols that I've described and observation posts. All of this was flown into a police network, and they would develop a pattern of activity and very patiently wait for the situation to develop, which would allow them to strike. They didn't strike at everybody. They would develop this, and I learned a great deal about how to run a counterinsurgency operation from the Brits. [Unintelligible] It stood me in good stead when I went back to the States.

When I did come back to the States, then, in the summer of '59, I got married to the girl that I had been dating, Peggy Hamilton. We went out to the West Coast, to Camp Pendleton, and I joined the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion.

Frank: Tell me, you wore the Marine uniform with a green beret I take it?

Trainor: Yes. My standard uniform was green trousers, khaki shirt, open collar, and wore the Royal Marine belt and a Marine—Royal Marines—green beret with the U.S. Marine Corps emblem on it.

Frank: Dress emblem?

Trainor: Dress emblem, yes, silver and gold emblem on it and wore my U.S. Marine rank insignia. Now when they sneaked me into Cyprus, I took off the U.S. Marine insignia and wore a Royal Marine insignia and passed myself off as a Canadian.

Frank: Now, when they had formations including carrying swords, did you carry your sword?

Trainor: No, we had no formations carrying swords. This was kind of like an FMF tour, and there was no dress uniform. Everybody wore the field uniform,

or the modified field uniform. But I never saw a pair of dress blues in the entire time I was in Malta.

Frank: Royal . . .

Trainor: Royal Marine.

Frank: Were there any enlisted Marines, U.S. Marines, assigned?

Trainor: No. No, that came later. At this time it was simply one U.S. Marine with the Royal Marines. We did have some aviators with the Royal Air Force and with the Royal Navy. The only U.S. Marines that I saw were when we had a cruiser come into Malta, into Valletta, and I invited the Marine detachment from the cruiser up. It was under the command of a fellow by the name of [First Lieutenant Richard T.] “Rick” Spooner who runs The Globe and Laurel [restaurant] outside of Quantico. Spooner came ashore with his detachment, and we had a military field day and then a steak fry and a beer bust that evening. Spooner came ashore and all of his Marines had campaign hats on. By the time the field day and the steak fry and beer bust were over, all my Marines—Royal Marines—had the campaign hats on, and all Spooner’s Marines had the green berets when they went back to the ship. It was just a great day. The Marines of both sides got to fire the Bren [light machine] gun which we had and our guys got to fire the BAR, which the U.S. Marines had.

Frank: Is this when Rick became such an Anglophile?

Trainor: Exactly right, that’s exactly right. That marked the beginning of his interest in and association with the Royal Marines.

Frank: What kind of weapon did you carry?

Trainor: I carried a Sten, and I think the Brits still use it. It was a little submachine gun, and it was a very, very useful thing and a very simple thing, but it gets jammed with mud. It had a bolt that had a kind of [unintelligible].

Frank: Pardon me for just a second.

End SESSION III



## U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lieutenant General Bernard E. "Mick" Trainor, USMC (Ret)  
Interviewer: Mr. Benis M. Frank  
Place: Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, DC  
Date: 10 March 1986

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### SESSION IV

Frank: We were talking about your exchange tour with the Royal Marines.  
Trainor: On Tuesday?  
Frank: We had just about gotten to the end. You had talked about the exercise and how you criticized it and the senior officer got all over you for your effrontery, "We sort these things out . . ."  
Trainor: Yes.  
Frank: That's great. Aside from being a good tour for a young 0302 and the camaraderie, what benefits really derive from this type of exchange tour?  
Trainor: Well, the training techniques, the approach of the British NCOs towards, particularly, recruit training. I had gone through USMC [U.S. Marine Corps] recruit training, and it was kind of the abusive school. We had a tradition within the Marine Corps of having these abuses towards recruits of yelling and shouting and screaming and all sorts of things. But I saw the British NCOs were firm, fair, took absolutely no lip from the recruits. The recruits did everything that they were supposed to do, but they never lost their temper, never struck or shook anybody. They did it all with command presence. This made a big impression on me and influenced my thinking toward NCO leadership thereafter including when I was at a recruit depot years later as a brigadier general. That impressed me; that you didn't have to rant and rave against the U.S. Marines or the British Marines. So that impressed me, the high professionalism of the British NCOs. They knew their stuff.

Our NCOs always got promoted because they made cutting scores and had time in grade and so forth. We only vaguely associated their progression with their performance. The British didn't have that many ranks. So in order to become a corporal you had to go to NCO school, which was enormously difficult and you had to prove your mettle. If you didn't cut it, there was no question. You just wouldn't be promoted. So they had a high order of professionalism. At that time, there was still, I suppose, a little bit of a British tradition residual that the officer was somebody who is assembled (all together) and died bravely, but didn't necessarily have to be the smartest fellow in the world.

I don't recall if, in the last session, I talked about when we were mounting out to go on an exercise and I went below decks on the ship.

Frank: It doesn't strike a chord.

Trainor: Well, an example of this sort of thing was when we were mounting out on an LST [landing ship tank] to go off on an exercise, and I went down to the troop barracks to see how things were going. The color sergeant was busy and packing and getting ready to mount out.

Frank: This is what you do as a U.S. Marine.

Trainor: That's right. So I was gently told by the color sergeant that the officers were up in the mess. So I went up to the mess and, sure enough, there were the officers sitting and drinking their coffee, and some had orange juice or a toddy and reading the paper and chatting. When their units had already left and embarked, then a land rover would come up with a driver and pick up captain so-and-so and he would get in the vehicle and went down to the ship. He stayed out of the mount out completely. An officer's place was in the mess; the NCO's place was down with the troops. My turn came, and I got in the vehicle and went down to the ship, which was an LST and went aboard and was shown my stateroom and then shown where the wardroom was, and my colleagues were in there. I asked where my troops were and I was told what compartment. When I walked in there, again, people were shocked to see an officer down there, and the color sergeant again had to gently remind me that my place was up in the wardroom and not down on the mess decks.

That's just, you know, a difference. The NCOs ran it. The officers were very strong physically, talented in field skills, but this sense of professionalism, of self-improvement, that has been the hallmark of Marine officers, I did not find present in the Royal Marines. I don't mean this in terms of a criticism. They would concentrate on the basic field craft and operations at the platoon and troop level, but they never thought much beyond that. They didn't think in terms of fire and maneuver and fire support. Theirs was kind of a light infantry perspective and light infantry approach. Rarely did I ever see any of them do any professional reading. They would read tabloid magazines, newspapers, and sports and things of this nature, but you never saw anybody picking up *Napoleon's Campaigns* or anything of that nature.

One of the things, which had an impact on later events, was their concepts of reconnaissance. I told you about the Cyprus experience in the last session. I came back from Britain with the idea that for effective reconnaissance what you should be doing is clandestinely putting small teams with communications out into the bush, the same as the British did, and their job is simply not to get involved in action but simply to report back to the rear all sorts of intelligence to build up an intelligence picture. I thought that as being the best means of reconnaissance. Now, up to that time, to me, reconnaissance meant the sort of thing that I explained in my Korean War days of a platoon or small patrol going out and doing direct reconnaissance into an enemy position and so forth and coming back. But this idea of a network of precisely located observers across the front, doing nothing but observing and reporting, that kind of recon had a point.

But I brought that with me when I came back from Britain and went out to the 1st Division in Camp Pendleton and was assigned to recon; I was pushing that sort of approach—heavy communications, small teams. There was another school of thought, again the result of experience, and that was represented by Jack Grace [?]. Jack Grace was a longtime friend of mine from grammar school. He had A Company; I had C Company. I might say, [Captain Ernest C.] “Ernie” Cheatham [Jr.] at that time had B Company. But we—Jack and I—had a running gun battle. He had gone to the Army Advanced Course down at Fort Benning, [Georgia]. And the Army, of course, thinking in terms of Europe, was talking about a kind of cavalry tactic for reconnaissance where you go in light armored vehicles and so forth and went out and swept the ground. So he was trying to push that as a concept. The Marine Corps, at the time, was trying to develop exactly how to use reconnaissance. I, on the other hand, was a hostage of my experience with the British and was pushing the other way. And also, in my view, the likely area of involvement of 1st Marine Division was not going to be Europe but was going to be Southeast Asia.

I’m happy to say that my concept was the one that won out because by the time the Marines were committed to Vietnam, we had really perfected this technique. We had used it: night helicopter inserts, decoy and deceptive helicopter inserts, the size of the teams and how they would operate. An awful lot of that stuff was done from 1959 to 1962–63 at Camp Pendleton. So when the time came to go out to Vietnam, we had a framework of reconnaissance operations, and all that was necessary was to actually test it in combat.

Frank: Who had the battalion when you joined the division?

Trainor: It was [Colonel Henry J.] “Hank” Woessner [II]. A very fine guy. He had a good head on his shoulders, and he was the ideal sort of leader for an outfit like recon in that he let the subordinates have their head. He’d give you a job and you’d go do the job. He became kind of a father figure, which of course changes occasionally, but generally speaking he oversaw rather than actually getting involved. With recon, that’s the way it had to be. The outfit operated basically independently, and even as an officer, you had to give a lot of head to the troops that were operating out in the field.

I tell you, that period was the best of my career. I was out there two years, and I was in command the entire time—recon, followed by 1st Antitank Company and then the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines.

Frank: [The] 1st or 3d?

Trainor: [The] 1st, no, I’m sorry, 3/5 [3d Battalion, 5th Marines]. At that time everything was training. There was paperwork but a minimum of paperwork, and the first sergeant and the chief clerk took care of that sort of thing. Most of the day, we were out in the field doing something. Recon was a dumping ground for troublemakers. We had the transplacement routine, and recon was the place where the recalcitrants, the troublemakers, the short-timers, guys with physical problems would be

dumped. Now, that wasn't good for a recon outfit but that was in fact the case. But I had great NCOs, and we had so few disciplinary problems with those so-called losers it would make your head spin.

Frank: Who didn't like recon?

Trainor: Well, it was a convenient dumping site from an administrative standpoint, because they were formed—the transplacement battalions—the separate battalions, of course, were not in this. Other separate battalions may have been subject to the same thing, I don't know. All I know is that we had tremendous turnover, and we had all sorts of “odds and bods.” You weren't getting the elite, which are normally associated with recon. But it didn't make any difference. There was another lesson that I learned in the process. Every day at recon we would have exciting training. There was something that you could do that was challenging, that was exciting and, frequently, fairly dangerous. The kids ate it up. And a kid who may have gotten into trouble elsewhere because he was just downright bored . . .

Frank: Bored, yes.

Trainor: . . . in one of the other outfits, in this outfit he didn't get bored. He didn't have a chance to get bored, and he had to depend upon his buddies and his buddies depended on him, and it brought out the best in him. We did really exciting things right there in Camp Horno [at Camp Pendleton]. We had the “slide for life” on the back of the hill that ran up toward Horno Ridge. And there was rock climbing and rappelling there, and we were starting to play, at that time, with rappelling out of helicopters—doing all these experimental things. Then we'd be down on the beach. You'd take your company down there, or a platoon leader would take his platoon down to the beach and do beach work with rubber boats. We would work with submarines and do lockouts with them, doing raids over at San Clemente Island, [California,] and coming back just loaded down with cactus sticks all over our bodies. But people loved it, just absolutely loved it. We'd go up to [Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center] Twentynine Palms, [California,] and disappear out into the desert for days at a time with just what you had on you. There weren't the safety features that we seem to crank in now, but we never had any serious problems. But, every day was different and up in Pickel Meadows we'd go up to Pickel Meadows and do all sorts of crazy things.

The limits of what you were doing were just your imagination. We had a training schedule of sorts, but mostly it was seeking what recon should do. What can it do? What should be the way? How should it operate? And we would get involved in the major exercises like Operation Moonlight where we had to [unintelligible] recon company. I was normally associated with the 5th Marines. I had C Company, and C Company usually went with the 5th Marines when they had an exercise. [Colonel] Webb [D.] Sawyer had the 5th Marines at the time. And you'd get a chance now, in the context of an RLT [regimental landing team] operation, to try out some of your techniques. So it was just more fun. I

just loved it. That was the best part of my entire Marine Corps career when I was a company commander.

When I left recon, I went over to the ATs [antitanks]. I took over A Company. The poor fellow that had it before me was summarily relieved because of some supply discrepancies in which he was simply a victim of an inept supply clerk; but he paid the bill. I had the choice of staying at recon, but I would have gone into the 3 shop on the staff, losing command. The ATs were just across the grinder from recon at Camp Horno. I liked the idea of staying in command, so I left recon and went to the ATs. [Lieutenant Colonel Martin J.] "Stormy" Sexton had the battalion. I don't think he ever really loved me. I think there was a cultural difference between us, a cultural gap. We did things differently, although we didn't clash. We were certainly not big buddies.

Frank: He had quite a career himself.

Trainor: Yes, yes.

Frank: He was quite a Marine himself.

Trainor: Oh, he was a great Marine. We just didn't see eye to eye.

Frank: Let me ask you something. Later on, this matter of proper employment of recon comes up in Vietnam; employment of division recon and force recon. Do you want to comment on that; what were your views of it?

Trainor: Yes. Of course I wasn't aware of the problem really. In my first tour in Vietnam I wasn't working with the Marines. In the second tour, the problem had been resolved and force recon had been amalgamated into recon battalion. But my basic thinking was, well, what's the mission, what are you going to do with force recon which is really the instrument of the commander of the amphibious task force, not the landing force commander. It is for pre-D-day operations in an amphibious operation, deep penetration and so forth. That's their cup of tea. And the division recon is simply the instrument of the division commander, part of his information-gathering network. Once you have completed your amphibious operation and you're established ashore, then I don't think there is any kind of rulebook as to how force recon should operate. It depends upon what the terrain and the situation is. If there is no reason for them to operate, then they should be detached and sent back to continue their training. On the other hand, if there are deep penetration roles that require the unique capabilities of force recon (parachuting, beach work, scuba gear, something of that nature) well, that's a different matter.

Now, in Vietnam, there wasn't that sort of requirement. So I would say that there really was no role for force recon in their prescribed role at the time. And eventually, this is the way it turned out, and force recon simply had just become a part of the reconnaissance battalion.

Frank: You were a company commander for the ATs for approximately six or seven months. What did you have in the ATs?

Trainor: I had the [M50] Ontos.

Frank: The Ontos.

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: The much-badly spoken about Ontos.

Trainor: Yes, but see, I don't think people ever really thought through what the Ontos was supposed to do. It played a role out in Vietnam, of course, far different from the role that it was originally designed for. It became an infantry assault support weapon out there. My thinking on the Ontos . . .

Frank: But pulled out.

Trainor: In Vietnam.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: Yes. Well, of course they were pretty vulnerable. But, you know, those 106[mm]s were pretty powerful and pretty accurate. My idea of the Ontos was that it was fundamentally an AT ambush weapon with tremendous shock power. The way it should be employed would be in coordination with your antimechanized plans, something that people don't seem to do much anymore. We were big on antimechanized plans. In my staff function, to whatever unit I was supporting, I made major efforts to develop an antimechanized plan. When I talk to modern Marines today, they've never even heard of an antimechanized plan. But an antimechanized plan integrates all of your firepower along the likely area etc., etc., and can be very effective. The role that I saw for the Ontos was locating it in positions, usually covering defiles where you have the advantage of close-in terrain, and using the Ontos as an ambush weapon to hit armor on the flanks and rear and then scoot—shoot and scoot. Then, in accordance with your antimech plan, falling back on another location.

Now, we practiced this and we trained at this, and of course, from my standpoint, I thought it worked pretty damned well. From the umpire viewpoint on some of these exercises, we got poor marks. But a lot of people, unfortunately, felt that Ontos was something that you put on top of the hill and fired at tanks the minute they came within range. Well, you just can't use them like that.

They were difficult vehicles to maintain. They were always breaking down. So it was a good idea; however, the piece of machinery was fragile. The Army didn't have it and that made material expensive for the Marine Corps to maintain. But the very concept of having some sort of a cross-country, tactical vehicle, with a modicum of protection against fragmentation, which carried six recoilless rifles, was pretty damn good. It served a useful purpose in the early phases of the Vietnamese War.

Frank: Tanks would have served the same function as an antitank vehicle.

Trainor: Yes, but a tank is a hell of a lot more expensive than an AT was. We were an economical defensive weapon. You could say an artillery piece serves the same use as a rifleman—killing the enemy and probably killing more of them at greater range. But it's the same sort of thing. This was an economy-of-force weapon.

So I thought the Ontos was useful for its limited role; disagreed with Stormy Sexton on its employment. He wanted to employ them more as tanks. I wrote an article in the *Marine Corps Gazette* on the Ontos that I

don't think Stormy liked particularly, on the Ontos. Then, from ATs I went on to 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, in anticipation of transplacement.

Frank: A six month's tour—January to June of '61—you were there; you were going to go out to Okinawa.

Trainor: We were going to go to Okinawa. I enjoyed that. Frankly, it wasn't as much fun as recon or the ATs, because there was a more fixed, required training schedule and we were working up to something. So you couldn't do the innovative things like the other two.

Frank: What did you do at 3/5?

Trainor: I had H&S [Headquarters and Service] Company and had all the baggage that goes with an H&S Company, and had a very strange battalion commander.

[Interruption in recording.]

We had a battalion commander who was not what I would call a real professional. He was more a political guy. He had been at Headquarters Marine Corps in the Manpower Department, and he was still playing the role of somebody at Headquarters Marine Corps. He was not professionally competent. He was, in my view, a poor leader, although a nice guy and he certainly gave me marvelous fitness reports. But he wasn't physically fit, and just to give you an example of bad leadership, the troops were lined up for an inspection. He was married, by the way, to a woman Marine, and he arrives late for the inspection in his convertible in sports clothes and parks, you know, right in front of where the troops are lined up for the inspection. They all had to wait for him to go in and get on his uniform and come out and inspect them. It was rather poor.

So the period at 3/5 was interesting from a staff perspective and from a leadership perspective in that you got so many odds and bods and so many strange constituencies.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: When you're dealing with the staff sections, each guy had his own preserve, and the people within the staff section didn't like to work for the common good. I'll provide you with a copy of a letter that I circulated around to the [laughing] members of H&S. My seniors, it took some of them for a j——s, but it was very effective. And I will say this for the battalion commander; he backed me up on it. What I did in this letter was set down what the policy of the company was and, in a sense, asked that the staff sections support this thing if they're going to have a company that's going to, in fact, be able to support them. It was a kind of unique letter. Let me tell you how unique it was. As recently as a year ago I got a call from a former NCO in 3/5 that was now out with the police department out in Los Angeles, [California,] and he had seen my name and picture in a Los Angeles newspaper and recalled me from 3/5 days. He telephoned me, and in the course of our conversation he reminded me of that letter. So it did have a tremendous impact.

Frank: Okay, well, we'll make this a part of the record.

Trainer: So, in anticipation of going to Okinawa, of course all my thoughts were in that direction. Then one day I got a telephone call and was told that I was not going to transplace; I was going to go on NROTC [Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps] duty. At that time they told me I was going to go to Yale [University]. But I was on the West Coast, and there was an opening at Yale and at the University of Colorado, and there was somebody on the East Coast that was going to go to the University of Colorado. Somebody thought it would be cheaper for me to go to Colorado than for me to go to Yale, and him go to Yale; that's what happened. So I got a set of orders—I was still a captain—and it was a major's billet as the MOI [Marine officer instructor]. I guess I came up for major that fall and was selected to major.

So we closed out our FMF experience, and I went off to Boulder, Colorado. We had one child at that time. If you recall, I had gotten married when I came back from England.

Frank: Yes.

Trainer: So we had one baby girl and my wife was pregnant again, and we took off for the University of Colorado in beautiful Boulder, Colorado.

Frank: Yes, when you were at Headquarters, you and Herb Hart were kind of “batching” it around.

Trainer: That's right. Herb and I, we formed a group called the 606 Club because we lived in a place called 606 North Edward Street there in Arlington just down from the Fort Myer gate. It was a house with five bachelors in it and, of course, there were running parties night and day. Herb and I had a great time. But that period wasn't always fun and games. I also did some master's [degree] work at night at George Washington University during that period. That stood me in good stead I think when I went on the NROTC job in Boulder.

I loved Boulder, loved the university, and loved teaching. I really enjoyed it. I think I influenced an awful lot of people. When I took over they didn't have any Marine candidates, and when I left Colorado, three years later, we were leading the pack. I still maintain contact with an awful lot of my students. Just about all of them served in Vietnam. A few of them stayed on for a career. Most of them, however, did their time and got out. But I enjoyed the NROTC tour. I also did graduate work at the time there. I had the usual problems that one has dealing with the Navy.

I had a vigorous program for getting the Marine candidates prepared for Quantico by getting out and doing a lot of humping in the hills. Then I had a kind of confidence-building course for the seniors, just before they graduated, where they would go on a three-day, buddy cross-country map and compass navigation course.

So they would go out in buddy teams and do a map and compass march, and my gunnery sergeant, George DeLuca, and I would kind of oversee the whole thing. But for the most part, they were out on their own. This made the Navy professor for Naval Science a little goosey. He was always fretting about this sort of thing, which caused some friction



between the two of us. But it was a great confidence-building sort of stuff. Yes, there were dangers, but then again our position was that it is not a risk-free world.

Summer times we would go to [Naval Amphibious Base] Coronado, [California,] to help conduct the summer training for the midshipmen. That was always a lot of fun because you got together with your fellow Marines sharing light duty, and Coronado in the summer time is very pleasant.

Frank: Yes, it is.

Trainor: Colorado had marvelous opportunities for skiing and backpacking, which I did a great deal of while I was up there. Of course I was there when the president was shot. As a matter of fact, it was just before class—it was a senior class—when we got the word on President [John F.] Kennedy's assassination. I suppose I was somewhat cruel. I was called out of class by Gunny DeLuca, and he told me that the president had been shot. So I went back into class and—I don't think the students have ever forgiven me for this—but I didn't let them know. I completed the class and then let them know that the president had been shot. Of course, that's a day like Pearl Harbor and VE [victory in Europe] and VJ [victory in Japan] Day. One never forgets.

Frank: No.

Trainor: I can recall that day, and I can recall when I came out to Deluca, when we found out the President was dead, to make sure that the flags on the campus were lowered to half-mast, but he had already taken care of it. He was a great guy, Gunny DeLuca. He was later killed in Operation Starlight in Vietnam, killed by mortar fragments. He was a tough NCO from New Jersey who had just a marvelous way with the kids—absolutely demanding. He had former time on the drill field, and he had a drill instructor's raspy voice. But he had the same sort of elegance of command that I admired in . . .

Frank: The Royal Marine?

Trainor: British NCOs. He could talk anybody into doing anything no matter how tough it was, just by challenging their manhood.

Frank: Good role model there.

Trainor: He really was. And the troops absolutely loved him. And I took a page from what I had seen with the British and I pretty much let him be the interface with the students outside of the classroom, in the Marine motivational type of activities. They could identify with him, and I felt that they would learn from him. One of the complaints that one heard at that time—and still hear—was that under our officer system, a man has gone through all this training and he's in his late twenties before he ever gets to deal with troops. That's true. We don't have the young officer approach like the British have where as a kind of a conditional subaltern they are seconded as a second-in-command to a genuine lieutenant, and they learn the ropes early on. With us, Marine officers don't get that until they've completely gone through their training. So that's why I think the

role models for young officers, early on, in the form of people like the guys that are running OCS [Officers Candidate School] or the fellows that are at the NROTC units. This is very important for young officers to talk to the men and test their ideas.

Frank: I remember when I was in Korea, I went over and visited the Royal Scots. Their company commanders were all majors.

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: All three senior guys.

Trainor: You're right. I remember we relieved a company of the Royal Canadian Regiment, and the company commander was a major.

Frank: Yes, yes.

Trainor: Now, that may depend . . .

Frank: Pretty senior, by the time he received the command.

Trainor: Well, in the British system a captain was a company commander, but they had a system when the young officer (as they called him) finished his training he would go out to a command. And he would be assigned to a platoon but the platoon leader was a seasoned lieutenant, and this fellow (for a year) would simply be kind of his alter ego or assistant. Then after that year, the lieutenant would go back to school for whatever MOS [military occupational specialty] he was going to get. Then when he finished that schooling, he would go back out to a command and now he would be the platoon leader, and a new young officer would come in and be understudy for him. That was the system that they used, which was a pretty good system.

Frank: Did you have any problem with the faculty? Had any of this business started on campuses?

Trainor: No. No, there was none of that. Obviously, there was always the liberal or radical fringe on the campus, which was opposed to the military. There was also a certain element of elitist group that felt that we really didn't have the same credentials that they had with the PhDs and so forth. They resented the term "assistant professor" and that sort of thing. But that was in a minority. A good many of the professors at the time were World War II veterans, many of whom had gotten their academic start via one of the wartime military programs. For example, the head of the Far Eastern Studies Department was a gentleman by the name of [Frank E.] "Earl" Swisher. He was a reserve Marine who had learned Japanese under the program that the Marine Corps ran during World War II to get Japanese analysts. The assistant administrator or dean of administration was this fellow by the name of Tom Hughes, who was a tombstone brigadier general.

Frank: Oh, sure.

Trainor: So, you know he would always see to it . . .

Frank: Oh, yes.

Trainor: And then you had . . .

Frank: Well, you probably had less of a problem on a state university [campus] than you would have, say, at any of the Ivy League or the more elitist [schools].

Trainor: I think it was kind of an innocent day in the country. We felt that we had a noble obligation, and we had the Peace Corps and of course the Kennedy aspiration that we would bear any burden in the cause of liberty. There was a distinct feeling of a crusade on the part of this nation, and the military was part and parcel of it. We had one professor on campus who was an absolute patriot. He was a fellow by the name of [Edward J.] Rozek, "Ed" Rozek, who had been in the Polish Army and was caught, first caught by the Germans and escaped from them, and then caught by the Russians and escaped from them. He finally found his way to England and ended up with the Free Polish Corps in England and made the Normandy landings as a tank commander. He had his tank blown up and his face was still scarred from the explosion. He was always banging the drums for an anti-Communist crusade. On the other hand, you had some of the radicals on campus that were blaming the Cold War on the United States. But on some, there wasn't the campus agitation . . .

Frank: That you had later.

Trainor: . . . that was to come later after the Vietnamese War. And nobody taunted or spit on the ROTCs when they would be out drilling and that sort of thing.

Frank: You said when you went there you had no Marine-option students.

Trainor: That's right.

Frank: There hadn't been a Marine officer there before you?

Trainor: Yes, there had been, but he had had some personal problems, and they did not have any Marines graduating that year. They did have, I think two Marines in the junior option class who were fleeing up as Marines. But I forget the exact numbers. But I was able to get some more Marines into the senior class even though they hadn't taken the junior class, and then Deluca and I, concentrated on getting people into the junior class with considerable success.

Frank: Of course, that's always a conflict for an MOI and NROTC staff.

Trainor: That's right. You know, we're competing with the Navy for the good guys.

Frank: Now, you were able to get all your academic work toward a PhD done.

Trainor: Yes. See, I had done my master's [degree] work at George Washington, so I was able to pretty much focus on the PhD work there at Colorado. And I had a good reputation with the faculty. I was invited in as a guest lecturer in some of the academic classes. So my relationship with the faculty was really superb. I did some writing for the newspaper there, some commentary, and participated in the senate activities, faculty senate activities.

So I tried my best to become part of the community, but still clearly maintaining the distinction that I was a Marine and that my function was primarily a military function and, as I viewed it, primarily to

excite the student into studying the profession. To me, studying the profession meant studying the history of warfare and reading professional journals. The other part of my job was to motivate them in terms of aspiring to be good leaders. I saw DeLuca's role and my role as being the role models for the officer and the role model for the NCO.

Frank: There were just the two of you there?

Trainor: Just the two of us.

Frank: You got all of your PhD requirements with the exception of . . . you didn't take your orals?

Trainor: Well, see, yes. When I was in Washington, I went to school at night at GW [George Washington University] and did all the work for my master's, less the thesis.

Frank: In history.

Trainor: In history, right. Then I was transferred and went out to the Royal Marines. When I came back from the Royal Marines, I got married and went out to Camp Pendleton. That's when I started to write the thesis. It was being mailed back and forth. Well this went on for a good 16 months, and it was getting nowhere because the professor by the name of Thompson—he was back in Washington. I would send some stuff to him, and lord, it would be four weeks before I would get anything back from him. In the meantime, I had to move on. It was just not working. So, I said, "The hell with it!"

Then when I went to Colorado, I explained what had happened and they saw my point. I gave them the work that I had done at GW. And I had really done fine work there. I think I had straight A's and maybe one B in the whole process. So they gave me credit for a good deal of it if I took two courses out there, which I did. I became very friendly with the professor who headed the history department, a fellow by the name of Dan Smith. So then he encouraged me to go on for the PhD. I did all my course work out there, but then I got caught. I was transferred, of course, back to Quantico just when it was time to write the dissertation. Now, the university offered me a fellowship to do the dissertation, and it was for nine months, an academic year. They would stipend me. The only thing the military would have to give me would be my quarters and allowance, and the university would pay me and also there would be no charge for the course work. So it was a pretty good deal for me and a pretty good deal for the Marine Corps. So the request went in, fully endorsed by the PNS [professor of naval science] and by the Corps. It's funny how the attitudes have changed over the years. There was no set program, and I simply got a form letter back that said, "The Marine Corps has no requirement for," fill in the blanks, and that was it, signed by a corporal "by direction." So it was a damn shame. Today that sort of thing would [not] have happened.

So, the end result was I left Colorado without the PhD and went to [Marine Corps] Command and Staff College. Then from Command and Staff College, I went out to Vietnam and then went back to Quantico. So things went on and I found myself basically in the same position that I had

been caught in on my master's program with this one exception. I registered my dissertation. I took my comprehensives and passed them, flew out to Colorado after Vietnam and took my orals and passed them. So the only thing to do was to write the dissertation. Eventually I worked on a draft of the dissertation, but it was depressing business. At that time I was in the plans shop at Headquarters, and it was just impossible. It was impossible to do. So I've never finished it.

Frank: That's too bad. You got into Command and Staff just on the eve of our deployment to Vietnam.

Trainor: Right. I went to Command and Staff in '64, the summer of '64. Of course the advisory effort was going on in Vietnam. That was my goal, when I finished Command and Staff College, was to go to Vietnam as an advisor. I was, frankly, somewhat shocked that I was about the only guy in Command and Staff College that seemed to have an interest in doing that. Everybody else that was going through the course was just not interested in Vietnam. That was an Army playground; that's not the place for Marines. There was total indifference on the part of Marines to get out—at least in my class—to getting out to Vietnam as an advisor. Now, there was a fair amount, in the course, on the counterinsurgency business, and as a result of our experiences in Lebanon in '58, the counterinsurgency approach was addressed in the *Small Wars Manual*—counterinsurgency from an academic standpoint. But, by and large, in the summer and fall of '64 there was general indifference on the part of the student body toward personal involvement in Vietnam. All that, of course, changed very quickly in March of '65 when Johnson sent the Marines into Da Nang, [Vietnam,] and then all these guys kind of perked up.

But in the meantime, I had orders to go to Vietnam and to join what was called the Naval Advisory Detachment of the Studies and Observations Group [SOG], which was the cover for a covert operation. To prepare me for Vietnam, I was sent down to Fort Bragg to the Special Warfare School to what was called the MATA [Military Assistance Training Advisors Course], Marine Advisory Assistance Training course, where we were taught Vietnamese on a crash basis and brought up to speed on the type of radios that the Vietnamese had there: the type of weaponry, mines, booby traps, that sort of thing. It was kind of a refresher course for people going out in the field with an emphasis on what was expected out there.

Frank: A lot of field work?

Trainor: Yes, most of it was practical, hands-on sort of stuff. I then flew out to Vietnam, into Saigon, and went on up to Da Nang in a CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] Air America Beechcraft. Air America was a CIA-operated airline that was widely known as a special operations group. The cover story was just as transparent as could be. The headquarters was in Saigon.

Frank: Everybody in Saigon knew about it.

Trainor: Oh, sure, yes. Then they had the various field units. The naval operations operated out of Da Nang, as did some of the cross-border operations. The main SOG training and deployment camp for some of the Army-related operations was out at Nha Trang. Now, they kept the thing pretty well compartmentalized, and I did not really get into or know an awful lot about what the Army was doing, except for what they were doing up around the Da Nang area. They had this operation called Shining Brass, which was cross-border operations into Laos to spot the things occurring on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. I don't know that they were very successful at that.

I had great criticisms of the way the Army did things, and, to this day, I see the same sort of mentality within the special operations community. Instead of doing the normal planning that we have always been taught to do, the Army—these guys, these Special Forces types—would come up with a scenario as to what they wanted to do and then they would build everything around that which they wanted to do. That, to me, was not very prudent planning, because there was no analysis, not estimates, no alternative courses of action. When you figure that when you're going on an operation, first of all your plan never works the way you want it to work, and secondly there are two players. It's not just you playing; there's another guy playing, and there's even a third player and that's luck or fate. So consequently, they would go off to do these things with their fancy Swedish Ks and all their fancy paraphernalia and, generally speaking, get their fannies handed to them and then have to scream to be taken out.

Frank: Fancy Swedish what?

Trainor: Swedish Ks; that was the popular submachine gun.

Frank: Oh.

Trainor: A Swedish K was to the Special Forces then what the Uzi [submachine gun] is to everybody else today.

Frank: Oh, yes.

Trainor: And we had stuff like that within our Naval operations . . .

Frank: A lot of Special Forces mentality?

Trainor: Yes, yes, and I became very suspect of the way those fellows operated. And I have to tell you that within our own operation we had some of that mentality in the SEALs [sea, air, land teams]. But I was the operations officer of this thing and insisted on a very, very professional approach. Now, the Navy commander who headed the operation was a SEAL also, and he was killed, oh, I guess about three months after my being there. The deputy took over, who was not a SEAL, but he was UDT [underwater demolition team] trained; he wasn't SEAL trained. He had a better, more balanced perspective. So we were able to keep some of the cowboy stuff out of it in our planning.

Frank: Yes, there must have been a lot of that. There was an article several years ago in the *Potomac Parade* about SEAL training and about what a bunch of jockeys and cowboys they were.

Trainor: Well a lot of them were. They really were. We depended upon them to train the indigenous teams, but let me go into, basically, what it is that we were doing. Maybe we can just take a break here before I get into this major element.

Frank: We're going to break now, and just as an aide memoir, our next session we'll be talking about SOG. Okay, very good.

End SESSION IV

## U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lieutenant General Bernard E. "Mick" Trainor, USMC (Ret)  
Interviewer: Mr. Benis M. Frank  
Place: Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, DC  
Date: 18 March 1986

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### SESSION V

Frank: We were going to talk about SOG, I guess. Yes, you'd gone to Command and Staff College and continued on from there to join MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam]. You joined MACV for SOG, which did all sorts of dirty tricks and this and that and so on. It's come out more and more, and you said you wanted to talk some about that.

Trainor: Yes. Originally, the Studies and Observation Group, which was the cover but everybody knew it was special operations, was established before the American involvement. The origins are hazy in my mind. Of course it was all highly classified, but as near as I could gather, it was established by the CIA. It was a CIA-run operation, and it had various component parts, one of which was the naval aspect of it. There was an Army aspect and an Air Force aspect. Nguyen Cao Ky [commander of the Vietnam Air Force] had been a member of this organization early on. It was covert, U.S. supported but with plausible denial, and essentially it was penetrating the north to gather intelligence, to do psychological warfare, to catch prisoners and that sort of thing.

Frank: Disrupt the Ho Chi Minh Trail?

Trainor: Yes, that was all part of it. Now, it was very strictly compartmented and none of us really tried to look at the other players involved, deliberately. It was run out of Saigon, [Vietnam]. And, as the U.S. got more involved in the war, the CIA started to back out of it. By the time I got there, it was a U.S. military run operation with CIA support. The visible support was CIA's procurement of equipment, weapons, that sort of thing, aviation support. We had our own airlines. There was Air America but then there was a SOG airline also made up of Pilatus aircraft and these gray Beechcraft flown by Taiwanese. So it was all hush-hush and spook-spook and very romantic and dramatic to a young Marine major. Why I got that assignment, I don't know. I suspect it was because of my experience with the British Marines and reconnaissance background. When I got out to Vietnam, I checked in through Saigon. The fellow that was running the operation at that time was a brigadier general by the name of [U.S. Army Colonel Donald D.] "Don" Blackburn. I'm sorry, he was a colonel. No, I forget whether he was . . . I guess he was a brigadier. Don Blackburn had been an old-line covert operation type dating back to his experiences in World War II where he was in the Philippines when the Philippines fell. He went into the hills and organized a guerrilla group and, as a matter of



fact, after the war published a book called *Blackburn's Guerrillas*. So he had been involved in this sort of thing and remains so to this very day, although he's long retired. Charming, gregarious sort of guy, but a very prudent and practical fellow and very politically oriented.

So I received my briefings there in Saigon from the naval cell which was made up of both Navy and Marine officers in Saigon, and then flew in the SOG airlines on up to Da Nang, [Vietnam]. Civilian clothes was the order of the day. I was not in uniform; I wore civilian clothes. At that time, the headquarters for the naval operations was in the infamous White Elephant, which is down at the fleet landing in downtown Da Nang. When I got there, I was assigned a billet to the villa 22 Le Loi Street, and living wasn't bad at all, I'll tell you. I would go out and sometimes visit some of my Command and Staff [College] compatriots who had laughed at me when I was in Command and Staff College about being anxious to get to Vietnam. And here they were, out living in the mud around the Da Nang airfield, and I was living high off the hog in downtown Da Nang. But the fact remains that an operation like this . . . oh, by the way, the press center, the original press center, in Da Nang that the Marines used, used to be the R&R [rest and recreation] center for operatives within our organization.

Frank: CIB? [?]

Trainor: Yes, that was an R&R center. It generally had all the food and booze you could ever want and women, you know, for the operators. But with the escalation of American involvement, this operation had to get the hell out of downtown Da Nang. So it moved out to the end of Monkey Mountain [Son Tra Mountain] peninsula and became conveniently located between Tin Shau landing, where the naval support activities had most of their work, and the end of the island, where the Naval Advisory Group which overtly supported the Vietnamese naval forces. We established ourselves in between and became the Naval Advisory Detachment. So you had the Naval Support Activity, the Naval Advisory Detachment, and Naval Advisory Group. So we kind of blended in with the advisory effort to the Vietnamese but had nothing to do with those people. We had a little beach there, hidden in a cove, where we had our boats and I'll get back to that later. We then built a living compound out there also.

Now, what this group did was to go north via the sea to do a number of things. First and foremost was to participate in the overall SOG effort of transmitting a message to the people of North Vietnam that there was a live, active, and relatively powerful anti-Communist movement resident in North Vietnam. So they did all sorts of things with broadcast and print and so forth to try to convince the North Vietnamese that there was a viable alternative to the Communist regime. In its own way, it was like the Contras of the early 1960s. I'm not so sure that it was any more a success than the current Contras.

Frank: Yes.

Trainer: We would send people north as agents to penetrate, to capture prisoners, to spread propaganda, and to make seaborne attacks. The prisoners would be brought back. There was an island that was at sea off Da Nang that was converted into kind of [a] prison camp, and the prisoners would be brought there. They would be proselytized by the agents. All the time they were supposed to believe that they were somewhere in the mountains of North Vietnam. Now I don't think we fooled any of them at all as to their location. If you are somebody that lived by the sea, you don't have to see the sea to know that you're near it. You can smell it. But that was the song. These people would be propagandized and most of them were sent back to their home, were sent back with gifts, and so forth.

Some were sent back as agents. Some were sent back as double agents. The Vietnamese were very clever. We Americans did not get overly involved in this sort of thing. We were primarily working with the purely military aspects. But they would get some fellow and they would genuinely convert him to the cause and then send him back in as an agent. Then they'd tip off the North Vietnamese that this guy was an agent and he would get picked up. The whole thing was part of the psychological operation to drive the poor North Vietnamese crazy. They didn't know who the hell they could trust. They didn't know how many were there [or] how extensive the organization was. As I say, there was no way of measuring the success of the operation.

Now, the way we were basically organized into two groups—the Navy group and the team group. In the Navy group we had PT boats. We had Norwegian PT [patrol torpedo] boats called Nasties, which were fantastic boats.

Frank: What were they called?

Trainer: Nasties. Nasty boats. N-A-S-T-Y. These were high-powered PT boats built by the Norwegians, powered with Rolls-Royce engines. They could make about 40 knots. We would use these boats to go north. The crews were all Vietnamese. Most of them were refugees from the north. Certainly all of the officers were refugees from the north—fiercely anti-Communist, very talented guys, very brave guys, but very practical guys.

The other part was the teams. We had, as I recall, six teams, and these were teams to conduct commando raids ashore. As a matter of fact, the North Vietnamese referred to our operations as “The Sea Commandos.” They were made up of Vietnamese also, again, most of them from the north, except for one team, which was made up of Nungs, who were of Chinese extraction living in Vietnam left over from old Chinese invasions. There was always friction between the Vietnamese and the Nungs. But the Nungs were professional. They were like the Gurkhas [Nepalese soldiers]; they were professional soldiers. As a matter of fact, each of the Americans that were involved in this thing had a Nung bodyguard, and they were totally dependable.

The teams were located at a place called My Khe [Beach]. If you recall, at that time General [Lewis W.] Walt had a little hooch built down on the beach.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: Okay. His hooch was directly next to the My Khe camp. It was an old, walled French camp, and that's where we trained the teams. We had [Navy] SEALs and recon Marines that were to help train these Vietnamese teams. We had a very elaborate communications setup—intelligence setup—directly from Saigon to us, from the Philippines and various other activities. So we had first-class intelligence to operate on.

We Americans did all the planning—very, very closely held planning. The Vietnamese never knew where they were going. This was because the Vietnamese leaked like sieves, and we never knew who was a spy and who wasn't. So, let me give you an example. Say we had wanted to conduct a prisoner snatch somewhere north of Dong Hoi. We, the Americans, would get all the intelligence and we would plan the operation. Then, with unmarked maps, we would have the Vietnamese skippers and team chiefs in and we would go over the operation and lay out the bare bones as to the location of the operation. They would see the aerial photos; they would see the obliques; they would see the submarine shots; they would see everything that we had. But it would all be sanitized. And then the skipper, who was going to be the officer in tactical command and the team chief, would work out the details of how they were going to go about this operation still not knowing exactly where it was. Then they would be put into isolation. The teams and the crews would all be in isolation and, at the appointed time, they would board the PT boats. We usually operated three PT boats at a time in support, and the teams would go north. Now, there was a prohibition against Americans accompanying them, and that prohibition was, at least formally, adhered to. But there were certain operations that we felt the presence of an American would be useful, and we went. Saigon never knew this. Well, let me put it this way; I think Saigon probably knew.

Frank: But they didn't want to know.

Trainor: But they didn't want to know. We never told them; they never asked. So we would go along on certain missions.

Frank: Who were you reporting to in Saigon? MACV?

Trainor: Well, I would report to SOG in MACV and SOG. I guess there was an interface there with [Army General William C.] Westmoreland and MACV, but then it went back to a special operations group in CinCPac [commander in chief U.S. Pacific Command] and then back to SACSAs [special assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities], which was the old Special Operation Agency that existed in the Pentagon, independent of the J-3 or J-5 [plans and strategy]. It was subsequently disbanded. As a matter of fact, I think [Lieutenant] General [Victor H.] Krulak set that organization up.

Frank: Yes.

Trainer: So that was the reporting end of it. When the ships went north they maintained radio silence. We had various code signals, which they would transmit, but they would never transmit them back to Da Nang. They would be transmitted to the Philippines and they would be relayed back to Da Nang and to Saigon. This was to maintain part of this cover that they were not operating out of South Vietnam. Well, it was a very interesting operation. I worked with some really fine professionals who knew their stuff, but also some cowboys. The SEALs, in particular, tended to be very cowboyish. There would be—and I think I mentioned in our last session—my concerns about the way the Army went about some of their special operations.

Frank: Yes.

Trainer: If the SEALs were left to their own devices, they would do things in the same inept fashion. But those that made up the basic staff were all professional sort of guys, and we did the work very professionally. As a result, we had reasonable success with very few casualties.

Now, how did the North Vietnamese react to this sort of thing? Well, I think that they felt that we were just a swift pain. I don't think that they ever felt themselves heavily threatened. But we were, indeed, an annoyance to them. Nobody likes their waters to be violated and teams going ashore. So they would react. In the first portion of my tour out there, in the fall of '65, they had a number of Soviet PT boats (Swatows) that they had down in the south central portion of North Vietnam. They would occasionally try to come out and engage us. We would fight them, and there would be a running gun battle at sea. They'd try to ambush and so forth. But then, in the winter of '65-'66, when the monsoon season was in full swing, all of those boats for some reason went north, up around Haiphong. We never engaged them after that.

Now they did come out, if you recall, and engage some of our picket ships that went into the waters close to Haiphong and Isle de Cat Ba, which was the big island that was at the main entrance to Hanoi. They came out and attacked them, and we sunk, as I recall, three PT boats and captured the crew of one, which we later, we in Da Nang, got to interrogate because in a sense they were our opposite numbers on the other side. One of the unusual things, I think we were the only organization during the whole Vietnam War to come under attack by aircraft. They came out against a three-PT boat flotilla and one night, and it was really strange because it was totally unexpected, and dropped some iron bombs. One iron bomb hit one of the boats and blew it up, and, you know, there was kind of panic in the streets about this whole thing. And in debriefing and all, we kind of put the pieces together and just stated the details.

Essentially what they did is they came out with [Antonov] AN-2 aircraft after the boats, very slow movers, and dropped the bombs, and they seemed successful. Well we went to panic stations to figure out what's the best maneuvering to avoid the bombs. Do you zigzag? Do you go dead in the water? We tried all sorts of techniques. The U.S. Navy,

which for the most part was kept ignorant of these operations—certain people knew about them, but for the most part they were kept ignorant. We had to work out some sort of a reaction plan to help the boats if this thing was becoming a common thing. So I went out and talked with the fleet representatives. We worked out kind of a quick reaction plan. They did come out again on a couple of occasions, and on one occasion the, I think it was the USS *Bainbridge* (CGN 25) fired a surface-to-air missile and got one of the aircraft.

I had mentioned earlier about the crews of the North Vietnamese PT boats having been captured later on. One of the things that puzzled us was, why they were using these old propeller-driven aircraft to do this sort of thing. The North Vietnamese skipper said that they had learned from the attacks of the American aircraft on PT boats in the north that the fast movers couldn't hit the target. So they felt the slow movers could probably hit the target, and in fact, they were right. They flew up the wake of the PT to acquire the target and just drop a bomb.

At any rate, once that aircraft was shot down that was the end of it. They never tried to attack us by air any more. Then they resorted to suicide tactics. You'd get up there and there'd be just literally hundreds of fishing boats out there in the water. The PTs would work their way through, and one of these boats would be laden with explosives. It would try to get alongside and blow the PT boat up. But it was a pretty inept technique, which we were able to counter. So, generally speaking, we continued to operate up there with relative impunity.

We did lose our Nung team on one operation. It was inserted and we were to come back three days later to pick it up. Three days later, we came back and [heard] nothing from them. We returned to the alternate site the following night and [heard] nothing from them. Then we heard from Hanoi that they had all been captured. I'm convinced to this day that some one of our Vietnamese counterparts decided that this was the final solution to the Nung problem. And that was the end of the Nungs and the end of the friction between the Nungs and the Vietnamese.

Some of the Vietnamese were very good, but the teams were rather reluctant to operate ashore unless they had an American with them. That's one of the reasons we clandestinely or covertly, as a covert operation, sent U.S. [personnel] with them; otherwise they would always find excuses for not going ashore or for coming back without carrying out their mission. But their backs were strengthened a little bit with an American [present].

We did have one very hairy situation. We had three PT boats going in. Apparently either they were alerted by some sort of intelligence network or just by accident they spotted us coming in and opened fire from the beach. It was kind of a hairy situation. We got the team back and aboard one of the PT boats. Then running south, the three PTs were firing at the beach and one of them ran aground on a shoal, and that was a hell of a situation. Now we had one boat aground. It was pitch black. The North Vietnamese didn't know what had happened. Another boat went in to pick

up the guys from the first boat. I was on the first boat, and it went aground. So now we've got two boats hung up, two crews plus the team hung up, and only one boat left. The North Vietnamese are now starting to get wise to the situation, so they start shooting up flares. Then they spot us, and they started firing out at us. You know, one of those real pucker ones. So the other boat wanted to come in, but we were afraid of it going aground because the tide was going out. So we used this to our advantage, and what we did was that everyone started to swim out towards the boat having the tide help them. The wounded and so forth were put on flotsam and jetsam, and they were assisted out. Finally we got everybody aboard the third boat and headed south. The Navy came in the next day and bombed the two boats that were left aground so that there was no salvage that the North Vietnamese could take advantage of.

So that's the sort of thing that went on with the SOG operations. We had been limited to south of the 20th parallel. We couldn't go north of the 20th, although I kept pushing very, very hard to get some operations north. I wanted to get up to strike Isle de Cat Ba. By the way, I was the chief of operations and training. Then when the guy that was the head of the naval aspect of this thing in Da Nang was killed in October, I think of '65, I became the deputy. So I was wearing the two hats, the deputy and also the chief of operations and training.

Finally, in the summer—I guess around June of 1966—we finally got permission to go north of the 20th parallel. That was a long trip—a 24-hour passage just in travel time. We knew that Hainan Island, [China,] had radar and of course North Vietnam had radar, but there was a gap between the two radars. Hainan was well out to sea, and so we were able, on the first raid, to shoot the gap between the two radars and caught them completely by surprise. They just never thought that we were that far north. That gave everybody a great psychological boost and had a psychological impact on the North Vietnamese also. So I continued in that sort of thing for the course of 1965 and 1966. At the end of it, then, I came back to the states to go to [the Marine Corps] Command and Staff College to instruct.

Frank: Did they debrief you when you left?

Trainor: Yes, I had to go through Saigon and had to be debriefed. There were a lot of sensitive things I'd rather not get into, but I can allude to one. For example, once we nailed a Chinese boat and took captives and didn't realize until we had sunk their—it was kind of a trawler—sunk the trawler and headed south that we had Chinese onboard. Then there was a very, very touchy thing. What do we do with the Chinese prisoners? We can't put them on another island. I had to go down to Saigon to talk about it, and I was kind of . . . I kind of got the impression that it was up to me to solve the problem that I had created, if you can understand what I mean, which I was very unhappy with. The number two guy down there at Da Nang was a Marine aviator by the name of [Colonel John J.] "Duke" Windsor. Duke was just absolutely spectacular in dealing with the powers that be in Da

Nang. He told everybody, "Look, don't put this poor Marine major on the spot on this thing. Don't tell him that it's his problem and for him to solve it." So I was very grateful to Duke.

Frank: Did they assume that you would drown them or . . . ?

Trainer: I don't know what. However I got the clear implication that they didn't want to hear any more about Chinese, and whatever I did with them was my business because it was my problem. Well, I was very disturbed about the whole thing, and Duke gave me support. He said, "Don't do anything that's against your conscience." But by the time I got back to Da Nang, the problem had been solved. My Vietnamese counterparts had taken care of it.

Now, a word about the Vietnamese counterparts; the guy that ran the operations up in Da Nang—and he had a hand, I think, in the ground force, cross-border operations also—was a guy by the name of Colonel Binh, B-I-N-H. I don't know what his real name was, but that was his cover name. He was one of these oily oriental characters, who had come from the north, who had very good political connections and ties with the joint general staff, and [who] was running a lucrative real estate, prostitute, [and] bar business around Da Nang, just milking the whole operation for what it was worth. So he had all the characteristics of the worst type of oriental warlord that we've all read about.

An equally slick character, who was my direct counterpart, was a fellow by the name of Captain Francois. Again, I don't know what his real name was. But Francois had been with the force commandos fighting with the French against the Viet Minh early. As a matter of fact, a lot of these people were force commandos who had come south from the north in '54. One thing I'll say for Francois was that he was a man of courage, if not a man of honesty. . . .

Then there were the various skippers. There was Captain To Ny who was in charge of the teams and Captain Nguyen Lo who was in charge of the Navy side of it. Now these guys were great. They were honest; they were patriots; they were very brave and very competent. One of the skippers was a guy by the name of Theiu, T-H-I-E-U, who was known as "Tiger Thieu." He was just a wild-eyed maniac; he hated the Communists so badly. We damn near had a mutiny on our hands one time when he had a plan to go in and do a number on one of the military posts up in the north, and his crew was convinced that they'd all get killed doing it, so they didn't want to go with him. We always had to keep a rein on Thieu. These guys were brave, tough fighters, I'll tell you.

Now, I have heard that Francois survived the war, and he was able to get out. Captain To Ny got out and got over to Thailand. What happened to the skippers, I don't know. Major Binh [sic], according to the information I have, got out of Saigon when it fell and was aboard some sort of a vessel and was thrown overboard by other Vietnamese and drowned somewhere at sea. Whether that's true or not . . .

But it was an interesting facet of the Vietnamese War. It was an operation, which was established in the early days of the war, when it was

still somewhat of a gentleman's war. It was overtaken by events, really, when the bombing campaign in the north occurred where we had major ground forces and major warfare broke out. It then became somewhat anachronistic. Shortly after I left Vietnam, the operations in the north ceased. The organization was not disbanded, but it was used for operations, commando raids, and that sort of stuff along the coast of South Vietnam.

Frank: When you left there, you had agreed [unintelligible] couldn't say. . . . Was there any interest or lack of interest as you progressed back to the States, sort of a feeling that they'd rather not know or . . . ?

Trainor: It wasn't so much that they would rather not know; I think there was relative indifference. The operation was a very small, compartmented operation. Such attention as there was on the whole thing was probably focused more on the interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh Trail than it was on the naval operations.

Frank: Special forces business going on.

Trainor: That's right.

Frank: The Phoenix Program and all these other things that [the] CIA was involved in.

Trainor: Now the Phoenix Program, to my knowledge, was not associated with the SOG operations. I think that was a special, totally different operation. But no, I know the fellow who preceded me, [Major James D.] "Jim" Munson, when he came . . .

Frank: Oh, I know him.

Trainor: Jim was very heavily debriefed, the same as I was heavily briefed before I went out there, at Headquarters Marine Corps. But by the time I came back, the war had taken on a new dimension. The wheel had turned, and this sort of thing was down. It was Mickey Mouse stuff; it was happening on the periphery. And generally speaking, people were no longer that interested in it. As a matter of act, when I finished teaching at Command and Staff, I went to the Air War College, and I was going back out to Vietnam. My original orders were to leave the Air Command and Staff College and go up to SACSA at the Pentagon, but SACSA was disbanded. So the interest in that type of operation started to fall off as the dimensions of the war started to grow.

Frank: SACSA stood for what?

Trainor: Special assistant for counterinsurgency and special activities . . .

Frank: Of course, Jim Munson had been out in Palestine as a truce observer.

Trainor: Yes, Jim kind of had one of these spook backgrounds. He had a spook background, and he kind of liked dabbling in that sort of stuff. I have to say that there is a community of people in the service and related to the services who go for this whole hog, who are absolutely bonkers over it, and they're still around. Many of them are the ones that are pushing the special operations business within the Pentagon. I, fundamentally, am a 0302 [infantry officer]. I'm very pragmatic, and I have to say I never really felt that I was part of that community, not because the community



didn't accept me. They welcomed me and I had the credentials for it. I just didn't feel comfortable with them. I felt that a lot of them were like they were right out of the *Soldier of Fortune* magazine. I think they were flaky, and they just weren't professional people.

Frank: It's just like the OSS [Office of Strategic Service] group or any special elite group in any war.

Trainor: Yes, yes. For the one or two things that they do great, there are a lot of things that they just do atrociously.

Frank: You read the history of the special operations executive [SOE] in England, the British SOE in France, and so on, and some of the memoirs. Christ, the losses that they took . . . what's the term? The compromise situations far overran any of the successes that they had.

Trainor: Yes. You wonder, really, what have you accomplished? Has it really done that much, given the effort that went into it? Fortunately, we didn't take many casualties. Obviously we had casualties, but the rate was well within the bounds of reason. But you say to yourself, "How much did we really accomplish for the enormous cost and effort of putting this thing together?" And, to this day, I question it. I didn't question it as that time. I had a job to do. I did it well; I was excited about it; I thought we were doing something enormously important. But, in retrospect, when I put it within the fabric of what was going on in the entire Vietnamese War as a transition during '65 and '66, I say to myself, "It really didn't make that much difference." It would have made a difference if the war remained kind of a low-level sort of . . .

Frank: Fun and games for a year.

Trainor: Yes, it was fun and games.

Frank: You got your jollies for a year.

Trainor: Yes, yes. Had some exciting moments, grew from a professional standpoint, made some fine acquaintances, but I have to say that it was a very expensive effort for very . . .

Frank: Minimal gain.

Trainor: Minimal gain, yes.

Frank: I guess it's like any war, initially, where if you really aren't accomplishing anything you look for gimmicks. Like World War II, you looked at para-Marines for the Marine Corps and the [Marine] Raiders, the commandos, until you can get your full forces going and your regular forces going [and] the full—the economic base—the industrial base going. You've got to get some of these gimmicks.

Trainor: Well, that's true. Now, this really wasn't a gimmick. This was very useful at the outset. But it was simply overtaken by events. It was fine if you were talking about a war, which was where the north was pretending it was not in the south, and the south was pretending it was not in the north, and it was basically a guerrilla war.

Frank: If it had remained a war of shadows, it would have been.

Trainor: That's right. But once the war, once the [North Vietnamese] 324th Division crossed the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone] and we started to get

heavily engaged with main line units, it was an entirely different ball game.

Frank: Very much like what's going on down around Nicaragua right now.

Trainor: Yes, that's right.

Frank: When you got back to Quantico was there much interest in what you'd been doing except for you friends and professional associates?

Trainor: No.

Frank: Headquarters Marine Corps didn't—wasn't interested in debriefing you at all?

Trainor: No, to my knowledge I was never called up to Headquarters to be debriefed. I think I went up there and voluntarily debriefed, but I think I simply talked to one of the watch officers in the command center. Nobody seemed to be really particularly concerned about [laughs] my debrief.

So I went down to Quantico, and [Brigadier] General [Frederick J.] "Fred" Karch was the director of Command and Staff College. I reported in there to be an instructor and was given, well, I was given a job that kind of overwhelmed me at the outset—a rewrite of the major amphibious problem for the Command and Staff College. The fellow that had been working on, and working on it for close to a year, had a nervous breakdown. When we went through all his stuff, you know, it was his madness. He obviously had crossed the line much earlier than people recognized. That officer left the Marine Corps and is fully recovered now and is fine.

But all of the sudden, I found myself sort of saddled with writing a major problem to be presented in the early spring of 1967. So it was a big job, putting something like that together, something that I had never done before. But I found it enormously interesting and challenging, and I had a lot of fun doing it. I also ran the professional reading and writing program for the Command and Staff College.

Karch was relieved by [Brigadier General Michael P.] "Mike" Ryan, and Mike Ryan had an entirely different approach to education. To compare this I have to go back to when I went through Command and Staff, in '64-'65; the fellow that ran the college was [Brigadier General Clifford B.] "Cliff" Drake. Cliff was a graduate of, I guess, Stanford Graduate School, and he was introducing the new approach to education to the Marine Corps. Instead of the lecture-demonstration-application that we all grew up with and the checklist sort of approach to things, his [approach] was creativity. You are not here to learn menus; you are here to think and to express yourself. So this was a revolutionary thing at the time. I loved it when I was at Command and Staff College. There was a give and take that reminded me of being educated by the Jesuits at Holy Cross. There was no such thing as rote, [there was] no such thing as making a statement unless you were prepared to defend that statement, and there was argumentation back and forth at all times, downplaying of the "yellow," the school solution. It was just a great experience.

When “Freddy” Karch came back and took over from Drake, he continued this sort of thing. I found it very exciting and I enjoyed working it. Mike Ryan comes in and takes over the Command and Staff College, and he is imbued with what I would call the University of Florida approach to education, which is learning objectives. He just absolutely threw the whole school, right in midstream, into a total turmoil, because we had to rewrite everything in accordance with this concept of what’s the objective of this presentation, what will the student learn, how will this be reflected. To go from the Socratic approach to education to the systems analysis approach to education—they both had merits—but to do this in midstream with the course that was already underway was an enormous burden. But nobody can tell me Mike didn’t realize this, but he remained adamant, in his cool, dispassionate way. He would take objections and nod his head and then tell you to go out and do what he told you to do.

So the school was in turmoil during that period, and I have to say I think the students suffered.

Frank: Sure.

Trainor: The instructors kind of went into a survival mode. So instead of really focusing on the students, we were focusing on doing the mechanical things that you had to do in order to get through the year, and that was unfortunate. I don’t mean this in any way as criticism of Mike Ryan, but I think it was an exercise in bad judgment to do it that way. But I enjoyed the tour there at Quantico. I was very comfortable in the instructional business. I loved working with the students and doing the counseling that came with a conference group director, made some very strong friends down there, and, in my own way, felt I contributed to the professional development of a lot of Marines. But I tell you, the old adage that if you want to learn something teach it, I’m a classic example of that. I tell you, I knew my amphibious operations when I finished three years as an instructor at Command and Staff College.

Frank: That you did.

Trainor: Then I finished up that and was ordered down to the Air War College to Top Level School.

Frank: With the amphibious tactics and techniques down there and doctrine updated, the one thing, for instance, that [Victor] “Brute” Krulak always kept in mind when he was in FMFPac was the unification fight following World War II and the importance of the roles and missions of the amphibious Marine Corps having been written into the National Defense Act, which is the reason he kept the SLF [special landing force], for the amphibious presence of the Marine Corps out there at the time when Marines were committed on the ground. Now, was this part of the curriculum? I mean, did Marine officers learn about this thing? For instance, how many officers, do you think, up at Headquarters today, know about the unification fight, know about the implications, which is still going on I guess.

Trainor: Well, I think more now than a couple of years ago simply because of the resurgence of the effort to reorganize . . .

Frank: The JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff] . . .

Trainor: And, in effect, unify with the JCS actions on the part of the SASC [Senate Armed Services Committee]. Yes, I think the students know when I went through and I think during the three years that I taught there, the students were very, very attuned to the role of the Marine Corps within the national security establishment and the threats and the air issue with the [U.S.] Air Force which was more or less the greatest outward manifestation of the problem. At that time, the Air Force of course, was trying to grab the air under the single-management program out in Vietnam, during that three-year period that I was teaching there. So, yes.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: I would say that there is a high level of awareness of the issue of the Marine Corps and the roles and missions of the services within the Department of Defense. A big specific issue at the time was definition of the amphibious objective area [AOA]. The Navy seemed to be weakening as to their role in the amphibious operation and the amphibious objective area. This was showing up in NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] exercises also. So we spent a lot of time trying to explain what an AOA was and why it was necessary. That was one big issue. Another issue that was totally unrelated to roles and missions was Marine aviation support for the ground.

Frank: I was going to ask you about that.

Trainor: Very serious problem; not the first year I was back there, which was '66-'67, but the second year.

Frank: It had to show up in the attitudes of the returning . . .

Trainor: Absolutely.

Frank: . . . aviators and the ground people.

Trainor: No, see that's one of the problems. There were no returning aviators. Command and Staff College in '67-'68, and I'm pretty sure in '68-'69 had no aviators because of the need for aviators out there.

Frank: We were so fully committed out there.

Trainor: They were committed, so aviators did not go to Command and Staff College. So what you had, you had a lot of Marine ground officers, who were majors and some had been captain company commanders, coming back to Quantico very bitter about Marine aviation; that it was not responsive, it had become calcified and was living in its own world, and they didn't get the helicopter support; they didn't get the close air support. Many times it was Army helicopters that would come to their assistance when Marines, ostensibly, would refuse to do it. There was very, very . . . I won't say it was universal, but there was a very strong strain of anti-Marine aviation bitterness extant within the student body for those two years. The guys that received some terrible flak were the fellows that ran the aviation branch there at the Education Center. They would just come

under all sorts of attack until the aviation people got some returning guys from Vietnam to leaven the bread and try to explain some of the problems.

But the Marine Corps, I think during the midportion of the Vietnamese War, created a problem for itself in its air-ground relations, which took a long time to overcome. I think perhaps we have overcome them now. But Marine aviation, in the view of an awful lot of ground officers at the time, was taking all of the best people, taking the lion's share of resources, and doing damn little for the Marines on the ground—very unfortunate situation. But it was there, at that time.

When I went back to my second tour in Vietnam, the problems between the air and the ground just didn't exist. And I think, in large measure, it had been solved out in the field.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: By putting the assets all . . . no, I guess they split them up, didn't they? How did they handle . . . ?

Frank: Well, one of the things they did was the wing, and I don't know whether it was [Major General Norman J.] "Norm" Anderson or someone else, sent his assistant wing commander up forward.

Trainor: I think that's right. It think that happened to [Major General Raymond G.] "Ray" Davis. He demanded, didn't he, that he get somebody up there with authority.

Frank: That's right. I was going to say [Brigadier General] Homer [S.] Dan Hill or . . .

Trainor: So you had an AWC [assistant wing commander] up there.

Frank: Yes, Homer Dan or someone, yes, went up there and someone who could make a decision.

Trainor: Yes. Well there was no question; there were problems. Aviation was not responsive to the ground types out there. I didn't personally experience it, but, you know, hearing all these stories coming back, where there's smoke there's fire. When I went back on the second tour, I had no problem at all with aviation. I was in two different commands out there, and the relationship was superb.

Frank: Now, of course you'd been overseas and I guess your overseas control date affected whether or not they . . . well, you had three years at Command and Staff and you would normally have gone over to Vietnam, but they sent you down to Air War College instead.

Trainor: No, I was not in the queue. Those who had come back in '66, ground officers were not in the queue to go back . . .

Frank: Oh, really?

Trainor: . . . to Vietnam, no. I went down to the Air War College [AWC] Staff and at the end of AWC was supposed to go up, as I mentioned, to SACSA. Then, when that was cancelled, the indication was that I was going to go to Headquarters Marine Corps. Keystone Charlie, which was the withdrawal plan from out of Vietnam with U.S. forces under the Nixon Vietnamization program, was under way. But then the Army could not take up some of the load, and they asked if the Marines could slow down

their withdrawal program. When that occurred, I got a change of orders and was sent back to Vietnam. That occurred just the day before graduation. We had already bought a house in northern Virginia in anticipation of duty at Headquarters Marine Corps. So it was a bit of a surprise when I had this rapid change of orders to go out to Vietnam.

Frank: This was after Air War College?

Trainor: That was after the Air War College. See, the original plan was that there would just be a brigade out there, and the division and the wing would have come back. But that was delayed. That didn't occur, then, until the spring of 1971. So that occasioned my going back to Vietnam. But normally I would not have been in the queue.

Frank: What about Air War College?

Trainor: Well, Air War College was a gentleman's course. I found it very useful. I did very well down there. Unlike the Naval War College, we did remind each other of our service affiliation in that we wore uniforms. I came after P. X. Kelley; [I] went into the same house out on the economy that he had been renting, and he had gone following the fellow that had been ahead of him. It was kind of the Marine house. It was a very nice house. P. X. had done well down there. He was a distinguished graduate. So I felt that I ought to do my best.

There were six Marines that went down there. The setting was superb. The Air Force does everything absolutely first class. The instruction was great; the guest lecturers were great. It was Socratic in its approach, left lots of room for discussion and disagreement and nobody trying to force a solution. I can say that probably 75 percent of the course was the same as any other war college. It was national issue oriented as opposed to Air Force oriented. Then maybe 25 percent of the course was pretty much Air Force oriented. A large measure focused on resource allocation as opposed to war fighting. But there was a degree of war fighting in it. The instructors were good. The Marine air command and control issue really did not emerge, which rather surprised me because I would make every effort to bring the issue up and to explain the Marine air-ground task force and why Marines have to conduct air operations the way they did, and that this was not incompatible with the way the Air Force wanted to do things, and the problem with centralized command if you're being responsive to the ground force. But nobody seemed to be particularly interested in it. It was kind of a nonissue.

I can't say that there were any stellar highlights other than good fellowship down there. I learned a good deal about the Air Force; I learned a good deal about the business of national strategy and resource allocations. So I grew professionally in the job. I wrote a paper, which received the writing award down there, the award for military writing—the [Major General Orvil A.] Anderson [Leadership, Research and Writing] Award—and ended up a distinguished graduate from the school.

I also had a baby down there; our fourth child was born on the 7th of November, three days before the Marine Corps birthday ball, which

was the social highlight of the War College. Literally, it was. Everybody looked forward, in the beginning of the year, to the Marine Corps ball because the Marines did it so splendidly, as you might expect. And 1969 was no exception except my wife was unable to be there just having had the child.

So when I graduated, I went and deposited the family in northern Virginia, and I went out to [MCB] Camp Pendleton, [California,] for a refresher course before going back out to Vietnam, which I found was very useful. It's amazing the changes that take place. For example, when I was out there on the first tour, the term "the ground line," "the blue line," "the red line" those terms weren't used. But when I went back on the second tour, which was part of the lexicon; "the ground line" being some of the streams, "the blue line" the big rivers, and "the red line" being the roads. So it was very useful to learn the language that was current in Vietnam; also to kind of sharpen skills in fire support coordination and get some of the techniques that were being employed out there and also some of the problems. However, instruction always is behind events, and I found a lot of the stuff that I picked up in that quick refresher course out a Camp Pendleton was OBE [overcome by events] by the time I got back out to Vietnam.

Frank: One question about the Air War College; had the "Bigfoot" [Major General Wilburt S.] Brown legacy remained?

Trainor: No. No, that Bigfoot Brown legacy still existed out at Camp Pendleton where he used to live in the BOQ [bachelor officers' quarters] out there and played the slot machines. They tell the story about one night he took one of the slot machines back up to his room to play and still wasn't winning, so he threw it out the window. Whether it was true or not . . .

Frank: No, that was [Brigadier General] Harry [B.] "The Horse" Liversedge.

Trainor: Is that who it was?

Frank: That's who it was.

Trainor: Well, it was attributed to Bigfoot Brown, but you know how rumors are.

Frank: Harry "The Horse" was a bachelor.

Trainor: Was Bigfoot Brown a bachelor also?

Frank: Oh no. As a matter of fact, he married, his second marriage, when he was instructing down there. He married Martha Stennis, who was the librarian at the Air War College, who was the cousin of Senator [John C.] Stennis.

Trainor: Oh, well then, I had it wrong. But that was the story I heard about Brown at Pendleton, and, as you say, Harry "The Horse." But now, down at the Air War College, no.

Frank: Now, did you know where you were going to go when you went out to Vietnam?

Trainor: Oh, I knew I was going out to the division, yes, but I didn't know what job I was going to get. Naturally I was hoping for a battalion.

Frank: Who had the division?

Trainor: [Major General Charles F.] Widdecke. Widdecke had the division; the 1st Marines, P. X. Kelley had just taken over; the 5th Marines, [Colonel]

Clark [V.] Judge had taken over; and the 7th Marines . . . oh, God, I can see him—big, tall fellow—but I can't recall his name [Colonel Edmund G. Dering Jr.]. Well, I'm sure you can look it up.

But the 7th Marines was standing down and starting to come back to the states in the withdrawal plan. The 5th Marines were moving up from An Hoa [Combat Base]. They moved up to the edges of Charlie Ridge and then on down to [LZ] Baldy, and the 5th Marines' CP [command post] remained at Baldy, then, until the 5th Marines were withdrawn in the spring of '71. The 1st Marines were not too far from the division headquarters, facing to the west and Charlie Ridge and the Yellow Brick Road area.

So I went out there and reported in, and nobody would tell me what assignment I was going to get, because they said, "One of the things the general will ask you is what assignment you think you're getting, and if you tell him what you're getting and he thinks that somebody's leaked it to you, he'll change the assignment." Widdecke was the master of this sort of thing.

Frank: Yes, I know. He was very rough.

Trainor: Yes, although I have to say I got along well with him. He was the division commander; [Brigadier General Edwin H.] "Ed" Simmons was the ADC [assistant division commander]; and [Colonel Don H.] "Doc" Blanchard was the chief of staff. [Colonel] Hugh [S.] Aitken was in the [G]-1 [personnel] shop, and I checked in with him and went up and saw Widdecke. He told me I was going to go to be XO [executive officer] of the 5th Marines. So I packed up my gear and went out and joined Clark Judge, whom I had never known and one of the most unforgettable characters in my life and my career. Do you know Clark Judge?

Frank: No, I know the name. I've heard things about him.

Trainor: Absolutely amazing guy. He was the most natural leader I have every known in my life. There was a guy who could assume full responsibility and delegated authority. He went on the premise that everybody wants to do a good job and nobody wants to do anything stupid, so let's all work in harmony. The term "gung ho," in its original Chinese context of working together, was just the theme of Clark Judge. We were somewhat the same in terms of personality, and I'm not so sure we would have ever clicked as XO and CO. Not in the sense that we were different, but our personalities were somewhat similar. I think the sort of guy that Clark Judge needed as his executive officer was a detail man and a hard-nosed sort of guy. I am not a detail man, and I am not particularly hard nosed. So I don't think the combination would have worked out. I think too many things would have gone through the cracks. He had a tremendous sense of the ridiculous, and I think I have a tremendous sense of the ridiculous. You don't want to get two people like that together or you're going to stir up some unnecessary . . . Difficulties?

Frank: Difficulties?

Trainor: Yes, yes. So whatever reason, I was only there for, I think 48 hours, when I was called back up to see Widdecke again. When I went back up, he told



me he was changing my assignment, and I was going to take over the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines [1/5], which [Lieutenant Colonel Cornelius F.] “Floyd” Savage [Jr.] . . . did you know Floyd? He was a tanker. Floyd Savage had 1/5. So he said I was going to take over 1/5, which had the CP on Hill 34 on the south end of the TAOR [tactical area of responsibility].

Frank: Why doesn’t the regimental commander make the battalion commander selection?

Trainor: Well, the only problem was that 1/5 was not under the 5th Marines.

Frank: Oh.

Trainor: [The] 1/5 was in division reserve and provided the security for the division TAOR, which had 26 tenant units in it [and] provided the security for the division CP, and, with two companies, we had the four companies in the battalion at that time, provided the quick reaction force. So 1/5 was under division control. The TAOR was eventually divided into three sections, three defense sections, with the things running back into my COC [combat operations center] on Hill 34 with the III MAF [III Marine Amphibious Force] COC, which was down at FLC [force logistics center] down by Red Beach, [Vietnam]. So that was our setup. They were in kind of static defenses at the time, and the action for the 1/5 was not in the defense of the TAOR—some infiltration, but insignificant.

The real action was in the quick reaction force business which allowed us to operate throughout the division TAOR, under division control, going after pretargeted activities or responding to targets of opportunity or special intelligence-developed targets. That was a very interesting evolution. I got to know Doc Blanchard during this time.

Frank: A character?

Trainor: He was a character. And he, in effect, became my ally. Somehow he kind of took a liking to me and . . .

Frank: Good, hard-nosed field Marine.

Trainor: He really was. He used to smoke these little White Owl cigars with the plastic tips on them. Of course, I’m a cigar smoker, and he used to always offer one of those terrible things to me, and I’d tell him I couldn’t smoke one of his cigars because I was a Catholic, and it had a prophylactic on the end of it and I couldn’t smoke cigars with prophylactics. He used to always get a kick out of that sort of banter.

But he had, apparently, commanded 1/5 at some time in his career, so this was his outfit, kind of his baby. So he always kept an eye on it. I was shrewd enough to always cater to his interest in 1/5. I would make sure that he would be invited down to see 1/5.

I started publishing a little newspaper, designed for the troopers, with lots of names in it and that sort of thing, so the kids just had to fold it up and they could mail it on home. That went over very well. Each company would have a responsibility to have input to the paper. I guess we put it out weekly, or maybe twice a month; I forget what it was. But that was a pretty exciting sort of thing. And Doc Blanchard thought that

was the greatest thing in the world; that was a real morale pump. Well, it was a real morale pump.

But the quick reaction forces operations were enormously successful. Let me tell you how we operated. They were called “the Pacifiers,” when I took it over, and Floyd Savage had been employing them. Of course, one always puts their own hallmark on whatever you’re doing, so I changed things around a little bit. So what I’ll do is tell you the way it operated when I commanded the battalion. Each day we would get from the air wing, either two or four [Boeing Vertol] CH-46 [Sea Knight helicopters], depending upon what it was we were going to do and availability of aircraft. I would also get a command and control [Bell UH-1] Huey with a bank of radios in it, and then there would be two helicopter gunships, originally Hueys, later on the [Bell AH-1] Cobras when we got them out there. With this we were going to carry out our Pacifier operations.

Now, you have to understand at that point in the Vietnamese War things were relatively quiet. The Vietnamese had pretty much gone to ground and were not trying to directly confront the U.S. Marine forces or even the South Vietnamese Marines. They would conduct their resupply operations down through the Arizona Territory and Go Noi Island and places like that. They were still carrying out operations in the Que Son Mountains, and the 7th Marines were having some stiff firefights down there. To the west in the Charlie Ridge area and to the north towards Hai Van Pass, it was very, very quiet. So most of the action, such as it was, was taking place down in the Que Sons.

So what the Pacifier, later to be call the QRF [quick reaction force] was to do was to go over the intelligence, all source intelligence, including the special intelligence that was being developed by the radio battalion, and try to develop target lists to go out and strike either because we had indications there was something there or that something was about to happen. We would always have alternative targets, so that if we went in and the thing turned out to be what we called a dry hole, we would move on elsewhere. So I would usually have two or three targets. And I have to tell you that your current boss, [Brigadier] General Simmons, didn’t really like that idea. He felt that once you got on the ground you should really go over the area, and he was never that excited about going in, declaring a dry hole, and then moving out. But there wasn’t any sense if you didn’t catch them when you first went in. The chances of developing something, I thought, were slim, and the mine and booby trap problem was so enormous that I was unhappy with troops kind of puttering around the countryside . . .

Frank: Taking casualties unnecessarily.

Trainor: Taking casualties for absolutely no purpose. So I was very circumspect and made maximum use of helicopters.

Now, one of the things that I did was to try to respond to the unexpected. We would have a general plan of what we were going to do,

but for the most part the initiative would lie in the hands of the troop commanders. I would be in the Huey with my S-3 and acting as kind of overall commander.

Frank: Airborne commander.

Trainor: And also as kind of an airborne fire support coordinator. But the action would be conducted by the company commander, and it was always the company commander with one of these operations.

Now, another thing, to cut down on the chatter on the radio and to cut down on confusion, I had colored patches sewn to the top of the helmets of each of the units. It would be a red, blue, or yellow patch and so forth, so that you could spot them from the air very quickly. Then, instead of trying to figure out what unit it was, because as you're buzzing around in a helicopter you tend to get disoriented, you knew there was a red. And you really didn't even have to know where they were, because when you talked to the company commander, you could just refer to red or blue or yellow, and it really worked out marvelously. Also, there was a policy that you did not pursue the enemy on the ground. You pursued him by fire only, because we had the long experience of chasing the Vietnamese and just running into a minefield or a bunch of booby traps. So we would make contact and the enemy would break contact. The guys that had made the contact pursued by fire. They did not try to attack them, and what I would do is then simply use the helicopter, if we still had troops airborne, to get in behind the Vietnamese, or if they were on the ground, the least engaged unit would be picked up by helicopter and moved around. The thing worked spectacularly. We really had lots of fun doing this and lots of success.

Now, during the height of the Vietnamese War, you couldn't do something like this. You didn't have the luxury of having all these helicopters.

Frank: Support yes.

Trainor: And also the supporting arms that I could call on with a magic wand. But it was not much of a war, and my policy was that the Americans were leaving Vietnam; the Vietnamization program was underway; the North Vietnamese and the VC [Viet Cong] were going to wait us out. They weren't going to do anything to really agitate us, so we were not fighting a war. So we were, in the British term campaigning. I told all of the officers, all of the NCOs, and indeed all of the troops, "Let's not get anybody killed or hurt unnecessarily. No heroes out here, we're simply 'campaigning' as the war draws down. We'll do what we have to do; we'll carry out our mission, and we'll carry it out to the best of our ability. But let's not go stirring up trouble and doing things that are stupid and getting people killed." You had to keep the reins in on some of the young lieutenants because they were trying very anxiously to be heroes, and some of the NCOs and troops the same way. But we fought a very prudent war and it was a very successful war. To give you an example of the success, (this is information I provided to the Historical Center to include in a monograph

on this period of the war in Vietnam) we had one operation, down south of Baldy, where we had indications that there was going to be a VC cadre meeting. In fact, they were meeting, and we dropped in on them and killed a bunch of them. One fellow was trying to escape, and the Marines were firing at him without success. This one Marine took off after him, tackled, and captured him. He was armed with a pistol, which the Marine then kept. As a matter of fact, he got the Bronze Star for this action because this guy was capable of shooting, all the Marines were shooting, and this young lance corporal took off and literally tackled this guy. His name was Luyen Luc Loi, and he was the chief intelligence officer of the Quang Da Special Zone of the North Vietnamese, although we didn't know that at the time. He was taken and kept in our custody and was questioned by our people and was not turned over to the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese didn't know we had this guy. Over time, he started to spill his guts and told us, to make a long story short, that he would lead us to the headquarters of the Quang Da field headquarters of the Quang Da Special Zone in the Que Son Mountains.

So we mounted—this was now months later—a mission. I think we got him in, it was September the 25th we caught this guy. It was in November before we had developed or the intelligence people had developed this thing. And 1/5 got the job of going on to this section in the southern Que Sons to see if we could find it. Loi was going to go with us. He was with A Company, with Captain [Anthony C.] “Tony” Zinni—now Colonel Tony Zinni. They were going in on the low ground and we were taking the company, reinforced, into the high ground. My jump CP was going to be in the high ground. We had staff on top and I had mortars with me. Zinni would land on the bottom, and Loi would lead them on up this draw to where the headquarters were. Well, the operation went as planned except it was the VC *111th Company* was defending this thing. When A [Company] landed in the low ground, they immediately got engaged in a firefight. We had some casualties. Apparently they spotted Loi because they were yelling out to him from the rocks and the caves, and Loi just started to shake like an aspen leaf and just wanted to go home. The intelligence guys were afraid of losing this treasure trove of information, so they were trying to pull him back to get him back on the helicopter to get him out of there, assuming that because we were in a firefight we had found what we were looking for.

Unfortunately, at that point Tony Zinni got shot. He gets hit, and he gets medevaced. When they take him out, they take Loi out with him, see. So the firing eventually quiets down, and there we are, where Marines have been many a time, in amongst the rocks and hills, and still not sure of where the headquarters were. So I was furious. So we started to move. Obviously we were in the right place, and it was just a case of finding it. But everything looked exactly like everything else in the Que Son Mountains—rocks and foliage and so forth. So we're screwing around, and it was the next day. Honest to God, this is true; the troops have lost

their fervor for the whole thing; it was just another kind of tromp around, and in this one draw there were a couple of guys throwing a Frisbee. The Frisbee zoomed away and landed, and the Marine went up to get the Frisbee, and he sees a hole. He passes the word and the platoon leader comes down, and sure enough it's an entranceway. Well, we had found one of many entrances to this complex in the Que Sons that, honest to God, unless you came on it by accident or unless you knew exactly where it was, you'd never see it.

It was enormous. This thing had been hollowed out; I don't know how long it must have taken. They were probably doing it when the French were there. The thing was hollowed out inside. It had a barracks room with bunk beds in them, the bamboo-type bunk beds; it had a VIP [very important person] quarters with desks. It had running water.

Frank: Was it abandoned?

Trainer: Oh, it was empty; it was empty, yes. It had bamboo pipes coming in bringing water, fireplaces in there, and most of all it had file cabinets in there made of the five-gallon coffee cans, GI coffee cans. They were stacked up, these metal coffee cans, and made into file cabinets. This thing was stacked with documents, just stacked with documents. There were about, oh I think, six bodies that we got that had been killed in the firefight. At that point we had one Marine killed and I think two wounded in the initial fight.

So the word went out that we had located this thing, and we started to exploit it. At this point, the Vietnamese reacted. They were trying to draw us off. We had fought them to get into the thing. Now they were on the outside, and they were engaging us from around our perimeter, not to get back in but to try to get us to chase them. So we had some interesting firefights there and some interesting air strikes; coming right down the valley with snakes [bombs] being released over our positions in order to land on their positions. It was pretty hairy and pretty scary. I'll tell you some of those troopers [laughs] will never forget those [Douglas] A-4 [Skyhawks] coming screaming in and dropping this stuff behind them and having that stuff fly over them.

At that point the boss, Ed Simmons, arrived during one of these horrendous firefights, and he wanted to land and visit. I'm trying to tell him, "We're in a firefight. Don't land! Don't land!" But he landed anyway, and I thought: Jesus, all I need is to get a brigadier general killed out here—the ADC—during this sort of thing. But, fortunately, he was not hit.

You talk about air-ground cooperation, the terrain was so rough, just gorges, and we had a Marine that was seriously wounded that we had to medevac. Every time the [CH]-46 came in, the Vietnamese would open fire on him. So he couldn't get in to get the guy out. He was going to take him out on the lift, just haul him up and haul him the hell out of there. A Cobra came in and it was just absolutely amazing. That guy came in, totally vulnerable himself because he didn't know exactly where the

Vietnamese were, and he took his weapons and just hosed the hill—just hovered there, a perfect target, and just bang-bang-bang-bang-bang. The 46 came in, hooked up the wounded guy, and got him out of there. I tell you, my hat was off to those zoomies. All the bad stories I heard about Marine aviators during Command and Staff College were absolutely dissipated by [my] experience out there. They were so cool; they were so cooperative; they were so brave; and they were so effective. I had nothing but the greatest admiration for them. This was just an example. I had seen many examples during that period. But, at any rate, the Vietnamese gave up and “de-died.”

We had been very effective with our air strikes and everything but artillery. I rarely used artillery in 1/5 because there were so many restrictions on its use—the various save-a-plane plans and so forth. One operation I was on, we got into, it was, again, down in the Que Sons but unrelated to this one. We got into position and dug in at about 1600, and I wanted to register defensive fires for the night. Every time we tried to register we couldn’t because there was a check fire in effect for save-a-plane. It wasn’t until about 2100 that we were able to fire the first registration round. We were in at 1600—that’s five hours later. They fired the first registration round for night defensive fires and damned if the first round, first two rounds, didn’t land on the very hill that I was on. I said, “Forget it. We’ll go without the night defensive fires.” But artillery, if you were in any sort of a fluid situation in anything where it wasn’t a preplanned fire, it was more bother than it was worth.

Frank: What did they call it, save-a-plane?

Trainor: Yes, they had all sorts of restrictions.

Frank: Well, that’s the old Victor-Negat [?] from World War II where there was a restriction that was . . .

Trainor: Well, they had various types of restrictions all during the war. They were altitude, corridor restricted, but this was called save-a-plane at the time.

Frank: That’s the old plans.

Trainor: But it caused everything to check fire. You could get it, I suppose, in an emergency. But there were so many helicopters flying around on logistics missions and medevac missions and all that sort of stuff and administrative missions. I found with the operations that 1/5 used that using artillery was not worthwhile. We rarely took our mortars on these operations, although I did in this one where we were going for the Quang Da Special Zone. I depended mostly upon air—[North American Rockwell] OV-10 [Broncos] and the gun birds—and they were superb. We had a working relationship that would never cease, so I had all the firepower that I ever needed, and fixed-wing air also.

But at any rate, we finished up the operation up in the Que Sons. They got some 30,000 documents including the pay rosters, the dossiers, and the photographs of all the double agents that were in and around Da Nang, to include the mayor of Da Nang. [Laughs] He was on the payroll. All of this stuff was turned over to CIA, and they went just absolutely

bonkers over it and said it was the greatest find of the war. There was some 27 tons of rice in there we were able to destroy. But the big thing was that we had gotten the central files of the Quang Da Special Zone, which were then exploited by our own people. I'm not so sure they ever did, Ed Simmons tells me, let the Vietnamese know about this. The Vietnamese never knew we got it.

So that was just an example of the way 1/5 operated in the quick reaction mode. It was quite successful, and it was pretty exciting sort of stuff. I left 1/5 and took over recon when [Lieutenant Colonel William G.] "Bill" Leftwich [Jr.] was killed in an accident—a helicopter crash—down in the Que Son Mountains, and then did the rest of my tour in Vietnam as recon. So I guess we'd better . . .

Frank: We can talk about recon next time.

Trainor: Next time, yes.

Frank: Okay, good.

End SESSION V

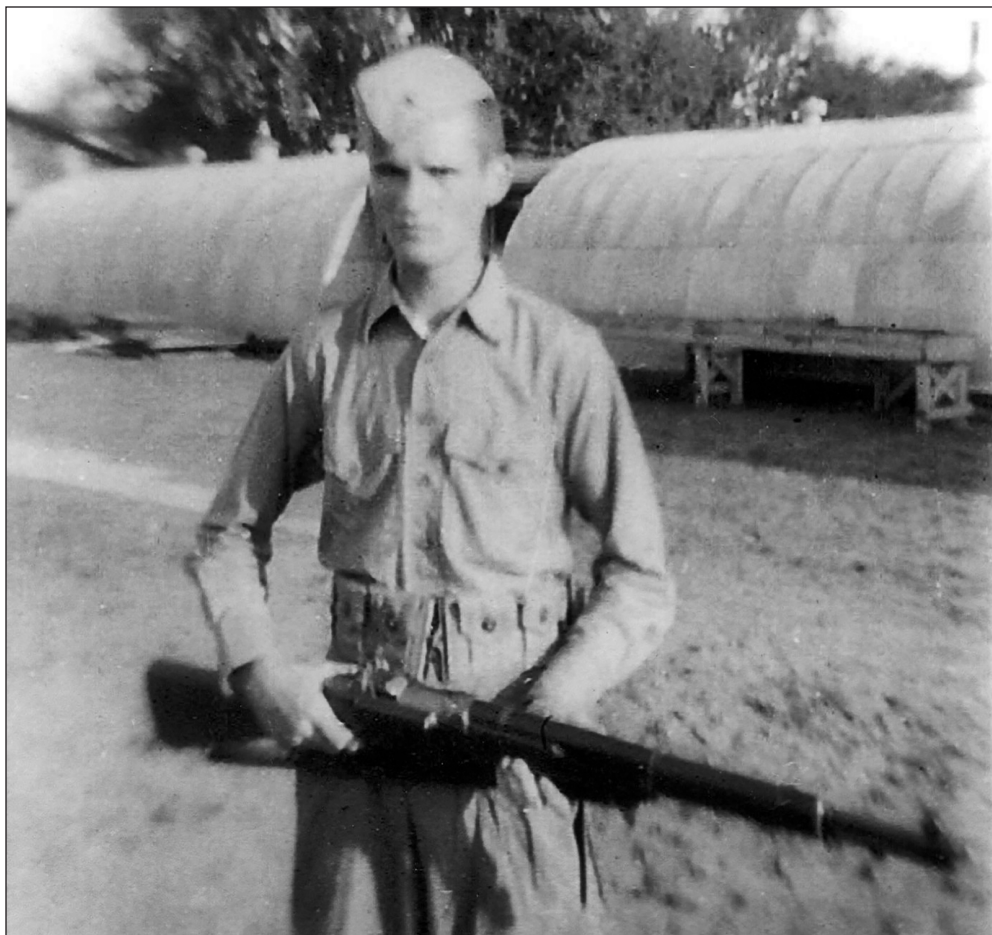
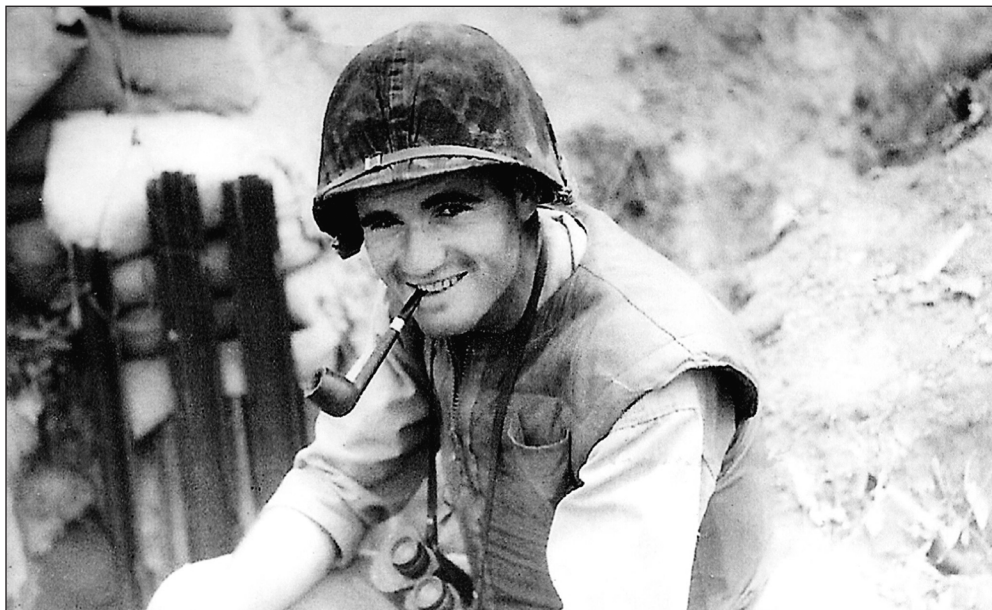


Photo courtesy of LtGen Bernard Trainor  
*Pvt Trainor served with Platoon 215, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, at Marine Corps Recruiting Depot Parris Island, South Carolina, in July 1946.*

*2dLt Trainor, platoon leader, 2d Platoon, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, sits on western front Hill 59 in Korea in the spring of 1952.*

Photo courtesy of LtGen Bernard Trainor







Official Royal Marine photo

*From left, Capt Charlie Belize, Royal 22d Regiment “Van Doos” (later chief of the Canadian Army); Capt Bill Schuller, Royal Canadian Regiment; and Capt Bernard Trainor undergo British Royal Marine Commando training in Lympstone, UK, in November 1959.*

*LtCol Trainor, commanding officer, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, conducts a “zippo” brief with helicopter pilots flying in support of a pacifier mission in Vietnam in 1970.*

Photo courtesy of LtGen Bernard Trainor







Photo courtesy of LtGen Bernard Trainor

*The 1st Reconnaissance Battalion in Vietnam 1971 includes a typical seven-man team: a team leader, a point man, two radio operators, an M-79 "Bloofer" man, a U.S. Navy corpsman, and a rear point man.*

*LtCol Trainor leads 1st Recon Battalion in a homecoming parade for 1st Marine Division in front of President Richard M. Nixon at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, in 1971.*

Official U.S. Marine Corps photo







Official U.S. Marine Corps photo  
*Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen Louis H. Wilson, left, poses with Maj-Gen Trainor and his family during his promotion to major general.*

*MajGen Trainor, who was recuperating from a parachuting accident, relieves LtGen John H. Miller of his command of the Marine Corps Development and Education Command in Quantico, Virginia, in 1978.*

Photo courtesy of LtGen Bernard Trainor







Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

*Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen Robert H. Barrow promotes Trainor to lieutenant general during a ceremony in 1983.*

*LtGen Trainor and a fellow Marine talk while on the defensive perimeter at Beirut, Lebanon, in March 1983.*

Photo courtesy of LtGen Bernard Trainor







Official Department of Defense photo

*The Joint Chiefs of Staff and their operations deputies in 1985. Joint Chiefs in front row, from left: Gen John A. Wickham (USA), Gen Charles A. Gabriel (USAF), Gen John W. Vessey Jr. (USA) (chairman), Adm James D. Watkins (USN), and Gen Paul X. Kelley (USMC). Operations deputies in back row, from left: LtGen Fred K. Mahaffey (USA), LtGen David L. Nichols (USAF), LtGen Jack N. Meritt (USA) (director joint staff), VAdm James A. Lyons Jr. (USN), and LtGen Bernard Trainor (USMC).*

*Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen P. X. Kelley presents LtGen Trainor with a flag upon his retirement during a ceremony at Marine Barracks Washington, DC, in June 1985.*

Official U.S. Marine Corps photo





## U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lieutenant General Bernard E. "Mick" Trainor, USMC (Ret)  
Interviewer: Mr. Benis M. Frank  
Place: Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, DC  
Date: 8 April 1986

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### SESSION VI

Frank: Mick, the last time we'd gone through SOG, Command and Staff College instructor, Air War College, back to Vietnam as CO of 1st Recon Battalion, we talked about that. And then you were coming back . . .

Trainor: No, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines [1/5]. I think we finished . . .

Frank: Okay, we did recon . . .

Trainor: Did we do recon? No, I don't believe so.

Frank: No, we didn't do recon. So, then you went to recon.

Trainor: Yes, the circumstances, of course, were somewhat unusual. [Lieutenant Colonel William G.] "Bill" Leftwich [Jr.], who had quite a reputation in the Marine Corps—had won the Navy Cross on his first tour in Vietnam as an advisor in 1964—had commanded 2/1 [2d Battalion, 1st Marines] and then took command of recon, and was killed in a helicopter crash down in the Que Son Mountains in November [1970]. The monsoons had set in and the weather was bad, and the Que Sons were usually clouded over. They had a team in the Que Sons that had a man injured and they requested an emergency extract. They were not in contact. The tradition within recon was that the CO of the recon battalion went out on all the emergency extracts. I say tradition, because I don't know the origins of it. I was told that [Major] General [Charles F.] Widdecke had told Leftwich that he, Leftwich, as the CO would go out on all these emergency extracts. Whether that was the case or not, I don't know. But the fact remains that Leftwich was going out on all the emergency extracts.

The decision was made, which I think was a bad decision, to pull these guys out. And I might digress here for the moment to say that this is one of the most difficult things that a recon battalion commander had to do, and that was to make the final decision as to whether an emergency extract was go or no go. Generally speaking, you gave the benefit of the doubt to the guy on the scene. However, an emergency extract was a very complicated operation and a very dangerous operation as a rule. People would gladly give their lives to get a team out of trouble. So the team had an enormous responsibility to call for emergency extracts only if they were, in fact, necessary.

Frank: That is where you drop the ropes down and . . .

Trainor: Yes. I'll describe the extracts a little later on when I talk about our modus operandi.

Frank: Okay.

Trainer: The request was made and Bill approved it. They launched, in the afternoon, two helicopters in the fog and in the rain. One bird, one CH-46, came out of the clouds and couldn't find his mate when they were circling to go into the position and never did locate him. The assumption, then, was that he was down. It was late in the afternoon; the weather was bad, and the decision was made to hold until the next day. The next day they got in there, and they found that the bird had crashed. I believe there were 13 killed including the crew of the aircraft, the emergency extract team, the team itself, and the battalion CO.

Of course, it was a shock to the division because, at that time, casualties were relatively light; the action was relatively low within the Marine area of operations. When it occurred, I got a telephone call to stand by with my Pacifier unit—my quick reaction force—to go on into the Que Sons if that was going to be necessary. So we were all saddled up and ready to go. I was called up to the division CP from my battalion CP on Hill 34 to kind of plot the action. But then the night became quiet, and we decided that there was no sense in trying to go in and get them out. There was no contact with them what[so]ever. The next day, they were recovered, as I say, all dead. I was called up by [Colonel Don H.] “Doc” Blanchard, and he said that General Widdecke wanted to see me, and he was going to tell me I was being reassigned to take over recon battalion, which, in fact, was the case.

So I took over the battalion, and actually expected to find morale very low as a result of this experience. But, in fact, the troops seem to take it in their stride. There was a degree of chagrin over the event and the loss of the people. [Interruption in recording]

At that time, of course, the Keystone Charlie withdrawal was taking place, and that made the recon operations and all information-gathering activities extremely important because we still had the same area of operations. We had one regiment—less the 7th Marines having pulled out—and the 5th Marines preparing to draw down; the 5th Marines and the 1st Marines spread over the entire area. And our recon assets were drawing down. I was going down to 16 teams, and we still had this enormous area to cover. So the job of intelligence was enormously important to the well-being of the division. And I want to say that the thing worked very well. [Colonel Edward A.] “Ed” Timmes had the [G-]2 [intelligence] shop. [Laughs] Widdecke used to drive him crazy too. We would plan very, very assiduously as to where we were going to put the teams. There was use being made of sensors, but the teams became very critical: airborne observation [and] the signal intelligence. So the planning was enormous; it was constant, very good relationship with the 2 shop, and with all intelligence assets that were available. I think some of the operations of recon were very, very effective.

At that time, the Vietnamese and the Viet Cong were pretty much lying doggo [hiding out] back in the hills. They were operating, but, generally speaking, they would avoid contact with the Marines. They were



simply waiting us out. So our job, as it came along became, in addition to covering the various avenues of approach, a job of trying to get prisoners and ambushing people, which was really not a typical recon function.

The way the teams would operate, the teams were usually about seven men. That varied. They normally operated out of Camp Reasoner, which was right by the division CO, which was also the recon CP. The teams would go out on the inserts, and we used all sorts of techniques to insert the teams so that at that most critical time—when they were being set down and most vulnerable—they had the best chance of getting in and then getting into cover someplace, or concealment, where they wouldn't be picked up.

I worked very, very closely with the air wing. The relationships were absolutely superb, and the pilots were terrific. Of course, I had known most of these guys because I had operated with them when I had 1/5 and had the quick reaction force. So the relationships remained absolutely superb.

The team would normally have a point man, two radiomen, a corpsman, a team leader, a rear point, and a blooper man—usually about seven men. They were all trained. Everybody had to go through school before they went there. Most of them had come from line units with the exception of some of the officers. We got some fresh officers. No officer would go out on one of these operations unless he had gone out as an understudy with another officer and was, kind of, blessed by the other officer that he was capable of taking a patrol. Not all the patrols had officers. It depended upon where they were going and what they were doing.

The teams would go out, as I say, from Reasoner, and be out anywhere from three to four days and then be picked up. Sometimes, particularly in bad weather, we would establish patrol bases up on Charlie Ridge or in the Que Sons, and a platoon would go in there. They'd bivouac [bivouac] up on top of an inaccessible point and run their patrols from there. But that was the exception rather than the rule. Sometimes they'd get out there in this bad weather and get stuck where we couldn't get them out, and they'd be in there . . . well, I think there was one patrol lead by [Michael J.] "Mike" Cross. He was a lieutenant and later my aide when I was back here at Headquarters, and Mike, I think, was caught up there for about 10 days. They damn near starved to death. They were in the rain. Christ, they came back and they had trench foot. They were a real mess. But that was the mode of operation.

The team would go out and normally they would try to hold critical pieces of terrain for observation or get down along known routes to intercept couriers and rice carriers and this sort of thing and most of all to look for indications that there was some sort of a buildup for a sapper attack or bringing in rockets. These were the two things that were considered most likely in terms of an attack on Marine positions.

Overrunning outposts and things of this nature, a possibility but it was pretty much on the low order of probability.

So the teams then, in a normal extraction, would come out by CH-46. Now, if there was an emergency, if they made contact and they were disadvantaged or made contact and had whipped the enemy but we felt it was necessary to get them out, they would call for an emergency extract. The way this would work, normally, they would make the call, and we in our COC back at the battalion CP—the call would come in from the team, and the word would go “contact”—and a red light would go on outside the COC. That would mean that anybody who didn’t have business with the emergency extract stayed away. The air officer would come in. The 3 would come in. I would come in. The company commander would immediately come in. Immediately Marble Mountain would have been notified. They would launch, on our say so; they would be prepared to launch the emergency extract package, which I’ll get to in a moment. In the meantime, simultaneously with the COC being informed of the contact, an OV-10—usually there was an OV-10 somewhere in the area flying around—would get the word, and he would go over and make contact with the team and provide any fire support that the team needed.

If it was determined that the situation required the extract, the emergency extract package would be launched from Marble Mountain. That consisted of two gun birds—at that point in the game they were Cobra gunships. They would go out. They would be briefed en route by the OV-10, and then they would enrich the fire support for the team. Two CH-46s would fly over to my CP, and they would rig one of them for the SPIE [special patrol insertion and extraction] extract. Now, early on we had ladders, but these were replaced by nylon straps with links on them. Each of the team members wore a harness with a snap link on the front so he could just snap onto one of the rings and this long nylon line that would be dropped down from the aircraft. This was used if they were in inaccessible terrain, and the helicopter couldn’t land.

Generally speaking, that’s the way they have to come out, because the teams had a regular drill when they went into contact. It’s an immediate action drill once they made contact wherein the point man would withdraw through the rest of the team and go back to a predesignated rally point. Now, that rally point, generally speaking, was also their pick-up point, but not necessarily. The pickup points were generally well-defended positions or positions that you could readily defend with a small number of men, usually in a tight spot, and just by definition it was very difficult to get a helicopter down on the ground to get them out. So we would use the SPIE rig.

So what the team would do is that the minute they made contact, everybody fired in the direction of the enemy, and the point man would fall back through the team, go back, and he would be the first guy back at the rally point. He would cover the rest of the team as they fell back through themselves under fire—the entire team—and frequently, in fact usually,

we'd shoot out CS [riot control gas] also at the enemy and fall back into this position and then hold it until such time as the extracts came in.

The aviation team would be briefed on the extract. We'd work together with the pilots. The rig would be put on the 46. An extraction team, with an extraction officer, normally the company commander, would be in the first bird. I would go into the second bird, and off we would go. Meanwhile the Cobra gunships and the OV-10 would be taking the area around the team under fire, giving them protection, getting updated, and we would get updated as we went out there. The FSCC [fire support coordination center] of the division were put on alert. All guns that were not engaged that could bear in the target area laid on a fire mission on a standby basis for the area. Two A-4s down at Da Nang airfield would be ready to launch to support the operation also. So the whole thing was a marvelous drill.

We would get out and the first bird would go in. The team would link up and be pulled out and then taken, if they were on the SPIE rig, they would be taken to a reasonably safe area, landed into the helicopter, and then we would all fly back. Meantime, the OV-10s and the gun birds would be doing a job around the enemy. The minute the team was out, the OV-10s would—and gun birds—depart also to escort us back, and the A-4s would come in and drop snake and napalm in the area. When they pulled out, there was usually a battery of three rounds from whatever artillery was available in the area also.

Now, there was a hell of a lot of firepower on in there. A good deal of this was psychological. It was done to convince the VC and the North Vietnamese that the last thing that they wanted to do, if they wanted to maintain their health, was to make contact and to stay in contact with a recon team. Now whether it had a psychological effect on the Vietnamese, North Vietnamese, or not, I don't know. I think it probably did; we did it enough. But it certainly had a tremendous psychological effect upon the recon Marines. They knew that heaven and earth would be moved to get them out of there and that there would be tremendous firepower that would go into the area as they were coming out. So it was great for their morale.

Night extracts were done exactly the same way except there would also be a flare bird up there dropping flares, and frequently a "Puff, the Magic Dragon" [AC-130 gunship] would be there to shoot the area up also.

As a result, we took virtually no casualties in recon. They were probably safer in a recon outfit, even though psychologically it was far hairier because they were operating out into deep . . .

Frank: Doing "Sparrow Hawks" [small rapid reaction forces].

Trainor: Well, we didn't use Sparrow Hawk at the time. That term was out of . . .

Frank: Let me ask you something, Mick. At this time, earlier, apparently force and division recon had gotten together.

Trainor: Yes, I think we treated that the last time.

Frank: Oh, okay. Doc Blanchard had to be involved with this.

Trainor: Yes, now force recon had been integrated by the time I took over recon. This was necessary, in part, because of the drawdown, notwithstanding the logic of it. The fact is that we had already lost one of the companies. I was just operating with two companies plus the force recon platoon under the Keystone Charlie withdrawal plan. That's why I say our teams were being reduced.

Now, one of the problems that I saw in the way we did business when I took it over was the fact that as the battalion commander, when I went out to ride on an emergency extract, I assumed that I was going to be able to exercise my authority. I found that I was simply a passenger in the CH-46. I didn't have any communications. This really upset me, because, if you recall when I had 1/5, I had a regular command, a C&C [command and control] bird.

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: And I was with the HDC, the helicopter direction center; it was the senior aviator, usually a lieutenant colonel, flying. And the two of us would make joint decisions. We'd resolve any difficulties right on the scene when we were airborne. I had the communications to talk to the guys on the ground; I had the communications to be able to coordinate fires; I was, in effect, an airborne fire support coordinator.

With recon, this didn't exist. So I said, "This is crazy." The thing came home to me, most sharply, within a week after I'd taken over recon. We were going out to Charlie Ridge for an emergency extract, and all of the sudden I find the two 46s that I'm with are leaving Charlie Ridge, heading south, and running along a river line. I spent 15 minutes trying to figure what the hell we were doing down there. It turned out that some South Korean soldiers had fallen in the river, and it was during the monsoon, and had been swept away. Some sort of a Mayday call went out for any airborne helicopters to go [and] try to locate these guys. This lieutenant, who was leading the flight, took it on himself to violate the mission that he was on to go look for these g——d d——d Koreans. It just made me absolutely furious!

So I come back and I say, "We've got to do something. I've got to have the same command and control capability that I had when I had 1/5." So, as I say, my relations with the wing were terrific, and I said, "I should have the same sort of setup that I had when I was with 1/5: a Huey with the radio communications in there. So I would use that as the command and control bird instead of flying in the 46 and coordinate the whole bloody activity." Now remember what's happening. We've got the gun birds; we've got the OV-10s; we've got the CH-46s; we have A-4s; we have artillery. All of this with nobody in charge of the thing. I have to say, I never succeeded in getting the Huey. The only reason I can say is, "Well, we've never done it that way." It was that sort of syndrome. And I said, "Well, we did it with 1/5 with the Pacifier." "Yes, but we don't have the helicopters available." "All right, give me something that is more

important. We move heaven and earth to get these teams out of contact, and you're going to tell me there's another mission that's more important than that? I just don't buy that!" But I never did get the Huey.

So as a result, we tried all sorts of things. We tried putting PRC-22 [radio sets] out the window, with an aerial, of the helicopter. [It] worked as long as the helicopter was circling in the proper direction. We tried to jury-rig a thousand different ways of doing it: took the crew chief's helmet so I could talk and listen in on the nets. But that wasn't satisfactory because that left the crew chief without communications. Never did fully [interruption in recording] . . . He was in favor of it but staff and the bureaucracy were always saying, "You know, there's none available and not on . . ." Let's see, I think I rode on 26 emergency extracts while I had recon battalion. I guess of those, maybe eight of them were night emergency extracts, and never once was I able to get my own command and control bird. It was just a crying shame.

Frank: Very frustrating.

Trainor: Yes. But recon operations were very successful. We did our job and had a lot of ambushes, very successful ambushes. So much so that the recon teams were becoming kind of killer teams as opposed to reconnaissance teams, and I had to constantly remind the company commanders and the teams that their job was to conduct reconnaissance and not ambush.

When a team would come back from its mission, it would be immediately debriefed; immediately, whether it's an emergency or normal extraction. They were immediately debriefed, and then they were given chow and a washup. While they were doing that, the 2 guys, in the 2 shop, would be analyzing their oral reports and looking for inconsistencies or holes or contradictions and developing another set of EEIs [essential elements of information] on the basis of their interrogation. Then when the team finished their chow and their washup, they would come back and go through another debrief to try to tie up the loose ends and resolve any differences. It was only then that they were allowed to c——p out and get some rest.

Now, before we left Vietnam, I had a massive effort under [Major Ronald L.] "Ron" Bub, who was my S-3 and a very, very fine officer, in putting together an enormous SOP [standard operating procedure] as to the way we operated, because I felt once we left country this sort of stuff was perishable, and we would have lost all these little techniques that we had used out there. So Bub put together this effort, which included the team chief, the team members, all the little things, all the ways we operated, and all the little techniques, and so forth that were useful. We put them on mats, so that when we returned to the states we could simply publish this, and recon in general would have this available to them as well as the historical people. When we left Vietnam, that stuff came back by ship. We got back to the states and got sorted out up there at Camp Horno [at Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Pendleton, California]. Upon the return to the states, it was never found. I don't know what happened to it. It was

perishable and valuable information, and somewhere along the line it got tossed out or lost or what have you. It was a damn shame because it was the magnum opus of recon at the time.

So the war was winding down. The 5th Marines then went out and we were down to the 1st Marines and eventually down to 2/1, which was the last battalion out. In the process, recon battalion returned to the states. I guess it was in April of '71. Most of us flew out. A few came back with the ship. Then we reconstituted at Camp Horno. The offices were there for key officers; battalion commanders and so forth were there for 60 days and then we were reassigned. But basically there were two recons then back at Camp Horno. There was the recon that existed before we got back; the one company that had been sent back under the earlier Keystone Charlie evolution. They were already operating and training. Then there was the rest of recon, which was simply coming back, being reconstituted, people being reassigned, getting new equipment, surveying old equipment, and so forth. So we were in a building state and in great disarray. But at least we had one company that was in good shape and ready to go again. [Brigadier General] Ross [T.] Dwyer was commanding the division at the time. He was a one star. Widdecke came back and went off on leave and then was reassigned to be I MAF, which really was just a paper assignment. He, shortly thereafter, retired and went on a fishing trip and died of a heart attack. It was a shame.

Frank: Wasn't that a surprise?

Trainor: Yes. Well, he was a tough man. He was a very bitter man. I would have hated to have been on the wrong side of him, because he would have made life hell. There were certain people he trusted and certain people he didn't. The people that he trusted he was very close with and they became his "star chamber." This included Doc Blanchard. He had complete trust in Doc. He had complete trust in me. He had complete trust in [Herbert M.] "Herb" Hart. I would say that was about it. We would meet with him after the standard morning brief, and we would meet again with him at the end of the day; this little group. There would be others who would come in. The 2, Ed Timmes, would come in. And while Ed Timmes was doing a great job, he was one of these guys Widdecke didn't like. Widdecke gave him so much static and so much trouble that Timmes had a breakdown, and he had to go take a rest for about a week; even though his 2 shop was doing just a super job. Widdecke would sit there and chat with us at the end of the day and the beginning of the day and talk about what we were doing.

If you understood some of his peculiarities, for example, when we were closing down firebases like Fire [Support] Base Ryder, you couldn't talk about evacuation or withdrawal because that was synonymous, to Widdecke, with being defeated and falling back. So I forget what terms we used. It was something like repositioning or something like that. But he didn't want to have any indication that the Marines were withdrawing in any fashion [laughs] when in fact we were; we were drawing down. The

assistant division commander [ADC] was [Brigadier General Edwin H.] “Ed” Simmons. I have to tell you honestly, I don’t think their relationship was very good. My sensing is that Widdecke tended to ignore Ed, and he would go around visiting the units and so forth and do housekeeping sort of observations. But it was my opinion—whether it was right or wrong I don’t know—that the ADC did not play a major operational role in the eyes of Widdecke. But then again, an ADC is supposed to operate as the division commander sees fit.

The climate of the battlefield at that time was relatively quiet. As I say, the Vietnamese were laying doggo. The race relations, we were having problems. There were fraggings [wounding or killing fellow Marines]. Thank God I didn’t have any problems to speak of. When I had Hill 34, there was a hand grenade that went off during a movie, and there was a mixed bag on the hill. There were engineers up there, the remnants of a 175 unit. There was a mixed bag on the hill, so who threw the hand grenade I don’t know. Nobody was hurt. There were racial tensions. There were attempts at black symbolism. There was an attempt in 1/5, some of the blacks, to live together, which I kiboshed. All of these things were real. It was a problem. But, at least on Hill 34, they were manageable. When I had recon, there were no problems whatever of that nature.

Drugs. I guess the drugs were around there. We did have people getting overdosed. It was available. I would say that within 1/5 itself and certainly within recon, there was no significant problem. Guys were just not going out in the bush, as these guys were, all hopped up. But I would be stupid if I said that there weren’t lots of drugs being used out there at the time.

There were positive steps being taken by the division to deal with both of these unprecedented problems—something that was entirely foreign to the traditions of the Marine Corps. But we were creatures of our society of the time. We didn’t know how to handle it. I will say there was a tendency for white officers to turn to black officers and black NCOs and say, “Hey, get those guys squared away.” I did it myself. I realize that was wrong in retrospect, but at the time, one just . . . it was such a brand new thing. What the anger was, was a big question mark because there wasn’t any slight of the blacks or any negative attitude toward them. They were simply Marines. But in the mind’s eye of some of the blacks, the agitators, the system was against them. And they would get everybody else agitated. So it wasn’t a question of real discrimination. It was perceived discrimination, but the perception became reality and was causing problems within the division.

But then again, you know, we were at the tail end of a war that we had fought, generally speaking, without specific objectives, and the fabric of the American military involvement in Vietnam was collapsing. I would say, in the line units, in the combat units, the problem was minimal and was manageable. But all you had to do was go to the rear, go down to Red

Beach or go to some of these [U.S.] Army support units, and it was horrendous. They had fallen apart in the rear. They were bored to death.

I remember we were, when I had 1/5, asked to go down to one of these Army logistic units, which was down near Nam O Bridge, to look into their internal security requirements, because the colonel down there was afraid of a sapper attack, and he didn't feel that his people were organized to handle it. When I went down there to analyze the situation and to make some recommendations to him, I was just absolutely appalled at the lack of discipline: people walking around with all of these crazy rags on and all sorts of symbols and colors, both blacks and whites; [and] dope openly being sold, and let me give you an example now. They had one sea hut which, 24 hours a day—this is in the compound—had prostitutes in it. So a guy could come from the slop chute and shack up with some prostitute. And the command knew about it. Occupying this sea hut. It was just deplorable.

I have to tell you the contrast between my first experience in Vietnam, when we were all noble knights in 1965 and what I saw when I went back there in 1970–71 was the difference between day and night. Now the Marines were still good Marines, and they would still go out and fight. As a matter of fact, I had to caution them, both in 1/5 and recon that I didn't want a bunch of dead heroes around; that we were out there campaigning. But the entire atmosphere, we had brought the United States to Vietnam in an exercise for which nobody seemed to know what the desirable outcome should be—with big PXs and theaters and the whole business. The business of carrying out a military operation was just absolutely deplorable. They could have taken 90 percent of that crap that was in the rear and sent it home and make the troops live spartan lives, and the troops would have been a hell of a lot better off for it, and our operations would have been a lot better also. This is not criticism of the Marine command. I think Marines were performing reasonably well. But a lot of this stuff was being pushed on us, and the mixed bag that was back in Da Nang area—Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine—just turned the whole thing into a lunatic asylum. I'm sure the South Vietnamese must have been puzzled as hell about the way we conducted war, because we weren't conducting war then, Ben. It was an absolute disgrace. Fortunately we eventually got out of there, but unfortunately in so doing we undercut the South Vietnamese, and the rest, of course, is history.

Frank: The whole problem with drugs and fragging and all this other stuff was new to the Armed Forces as a whole, especially fragging.

Trainor: Yes, yes. But I never saw anybody that had anxious pains over the thing. I was never worried about being fragged.

Frank: No reason for you to.

Trainor: No, I didn't think so, and I don't think any of my officers were worried about being fragged. There may have been an NCO or two that was a little worried. Sometimes you have some friction on that level, between an NCO and a trooper. But I can say that I had insignificant disciplinary



problems within 1/5 and no disciplinary problems in recon, none what[so]ever.

Frank: I guess they would think that they would be posted out of recon, which they didn't want.

Trainor: That's right. They felt that they were pretty elite. The stuff they were doing was exciting. They really felt like they were doing something. They were out in the brush. Many of the line unit—not all of them, but many of them—and all of them at some time were simply sitting around and waiting. But, there was little action during that period; there were no major battles being fought. I guess the last major one, if you could call it that, was Imperial Lake down . . . and that was fought by the 7th Marines down in the Que Sons before they left. After that there was very little, and, as I say, the North Vietnamese were simply keeping their infrastructure in place and just waiting for the Marines to leave.

So that concluded my tour in Vietnam, my second tour. I didn't come back bitter, but I came back far less certain as to what the hell it was we were doing out there than I was when I went out on my first tour.

With that, I returned to Washington, [DC,] to go to Headquarters Marine Corps. I joined the plans shop as an action officer. I was a lieutenant colonel, but I had been picked up for colonel but had not yet been promoted. So I went in as an action officer in what at that time was known as the Joint Planning Group dealing with JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff] papers. [Major] General Hugh [M.] Elwood was the operations deputy of the Marine Corps, and [Major General Foster C.] "Frosty" LaHue was the deputy, OpDep [operations deputy], and the chief of the plans shop, the shop that I went into. At that time it was divided, as it is now, functionally and also regionally—functionally in terms of strategic matters, nuclear matters, [and] functionally according to functional papers of the JCS such as the JSCAP [Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan] and then regionally into an eastern team and a western team.

I went to the western team, which dealt with the Middle East, Europe, and the Western Hemisphere. I took over the European desk, the NATO desk. [Robert C.] "Bud" McFarlane, who later became national security advisor to the president, had the Middle East desk. [Colonel Carlton D.] "Carl" Goodiel [Jr.], a very fine artillery officer who later died of cancer, was the head of the team. So I spent some time in the trenches as an action officer, learning the JCS business, and found out that I not only liked it but I was ideal for it. I was a kid from the Bronx. I was used to the street environment, that you didn't trust anybody, where there was nothing you enjoyed more than getting into a good argument, a good fight with somebody, and trying to outfox somebody. I just found that I was right in my element, and I was very successful as an action officer in getting the Marine Corps' point across and also the point of view that we felt was good for national security within my realm.

Carl Goodiel left, and I made my number as a colonel, and then took over as the head of the western team and as the planner, the JCS

planner for the Marine Corps in matters of the Middle East and Europe and the Western Hemisphere. So I held that job . . .

Frank: You worked with CinCNELM [commander in chief U.S. Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean], the ready force, and things like that?

Trainor: Oh, yes. Dealt with all of the issues, political military issues dealing with that part of the world that the JCS were addressing. At that time we had the flimsy buff, green system where an action officer would work on a flimsy and then it would be passed on up to the service planners, which were colonels. They would work the green paper. Then a paper that was not resolved at the colonel level would go to the major general level. Then it would eventually be red-striped by either the operations deputy—the three-star operations deputy—or the chiefs themselves.

I worked for some very fine people. I thought Frosty LaHue was superb. He gave way to [Major General Herbert L.] “Herb” Beckington, who was an absolutely outstanding officer and perfect and had a tremendous reputation over in the JCS, over in the “tank,” which was the pseudonym for the conference room that all the JCS meetings were held in. He had a tremendous reputation, and I learned a great deal from him. I would say I grew in grace and wisdom under the tutelage of such people as he. He then became [a] three star and became the operations deputy, [Major General Norman W.] “Norm” Gourley, an aviator, came in to replace him as the planner. I thought well of these people. They did well. I learned a great deal under them, and then when I recycled back into this business later on as a general officer myself, I was able to draw on this tremendous experience that I had down in the trenches as an action officer and as a planner operating under some very, very superb general officers.

The fights that we had at that time were very similar to the ones that we continued to have when I was later on back as director of plans and as the operations deputy. The Marine air command and control issue was always one of the major stumbling blocks. But I found that I liked that sort of work, and I found that I was good at it.

I’m going to say that there are some people, from action officer right on through the operations deputy at all the ranks, that didn’t like that sort of environment. They did not like the infighting; it wasn’t Headquarters. It was the JCS fighting, the fact that you had to go over there, and you got into some great, bitter fights, and you had to be two-faced, you know. You had to be an actor. Everybody knew how to play the game, but some people played it better than others, and some people liked it, and some people didn’t. I liked it. I thrived in that environment. Guys like Beckington did. There are those that didn’t like it, for example, like John H. Miller, who was the operations deputy. John Miller just didn’t like it. He did a great job, but he was not comfortable playing that role. He was a Texas farm boy. What we were talking about, when you got in the tank—not all the time, but frequently—was gutter fighting, and the agenda that you were addressing wasn’t the agenda at all. There was always a hidden agenda somewhere along the line, and you had to be able to ferret

that out. But I'll address more of that when I address my role as both the plans officer and later on as the deputy chief of staff for Plans, Policy, and Operations.

Frank: So you were there for a total of three years.

Trainor: I was there for three years, and then received a much unexpected set of orders to New York.

JCS kidney, that's another thing you develop. You develop JCS kidneys; you always out-waited the other guy. [Laughs] Now do you have any questions that you think you want to . . . ?

Frank: How are the Marines thought of at JCS?

Trainor: That's a good question. The . . .

Frank: Marines came into joint planning late in the game. I can remember in the '60s, we still weren't part of it. In the '60s we didn't have . . . we weren't computerized.

Trainor: Yes. Well, when I first, of course, went there, the Commandant was not a full member of the JCS. He did not become a full member until 1975. He would be a member of the JCS and attend meetings when matters of direct concern to the Marine Corps were involved.

Frank: And of course during General [Wallace M.] Greene [Jr.]'s regime he made it a point to make everything a Marine concern.

Trainor: That's exactly right. The one who would decide whether it was a matter of direct interest to the Marine Corps was the Commandant of the Marine Corps. And General Greene said, "Everything's of direct interest to us." So we, then, attended every one of the meetings.

Now, what was the opinion of the Marine Corps? That's difficult to generalize. Those Marines who were serving on the Joint Staff, I think, universally had good reputations. The Marines who were working the JCS issues, I think had a good reputation because we got some very, very fine officers in the Joint Planning Group. Manpower was good to what is now PP&O [Plans, Policy, and Operations] and you pretty much had carte blanche to pull the people in that you wanted to work there. So there were all heavy hitters that were working in the plans business. So under any circumstance, these guys were going to look good.

But I think the reputation which emerged during this period was one of the honest broker; you heard that term used time and time again, because the Marines had declared direct interest on just about everything. They really didn't have direct interest on the majority of the things that were being addressed in the tank. So therefore the Marine, who was in the tank, whether he be an AO [action officer], a planner, or whether it be a general officer, could generally speaking be the guy that would take the objective view and try to bring some harmony together. Frequently the director of the Joint Staff, or the Joint Staff representative at the planner or the action officer level, was directed as to where that issue should come out. So he, sometimes, could not be the honest broker. So the Services and the Joint Staff rep, generally speaking if it was in their interest or the collective interest, would look to the Marine to be the honest broker in

trying to adjudicate some of the thorny issues. I think with the talented people that we had in those jobs, we established a very valid reputation. I know, when I returned years later as a general officer, that reputation was still intact. And, to my knowledge, it's still intact today.

But at any rate, I got a telephone call from a friend of mine, who told me that I was going off on recruiting duty, and I said, "That's crazy. I have never been in that sort of business in my life. I know nothing about it." He said, "Well, you are going," and it turned out to be true.

Now at that time, we had gone to the all-volunteer force, and the recruiting situation in the Marine Corps was absolutely terrible. And the quality of people that we had in the Marine Corps was terrible, not universally, but generally. We had a lot of bad actors in the Marine Corps. And I'll tell you what it was attributed to: it was the fact that we were trying to make numbers, and we went for quantity and not quality. We couldn't get the quality in the numbers we needed, so we took people in that should have been in jail. And we had great difficulty in getting those.

We didn't know how to recruit. We thought we were recruiters because we put a guy in a pair of dress blues out in some sort of a store window in a community. He was an order taker, and he could afford to be an order taker while we had the draft. But with the collapse in Vietnam and the antimilitary feeling, which was rampant throughout the country, and the loss of the draft, the guys that were on recruiting duty found that there was nobody coming in. They hadn't the foggiest notion of how to go about and recruit. But yet they were under tremendous pressure to make the numbers. So what would they do? They'd go to the pool halls. They'd go to the jails, and we were taking in the slime.

Then the slime was corrupting the entire Marine Corps. These turkeys would give the drill instructors trouble. We'd have terrible attrition rates at [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] Parris Island [in South Carolina] and abuse at Parris Island simply out of frustration on the part of the drill instructors with the miserable specimens that they had to deal with. You had a situation where the drill instructors were blaming the recruiters for sending them lousy people, and the recruiters were blaming the drill instructors for abusing the marvelous talent that they were sending down to them. So we had a very, very bad situation internally within the Marine Corps recruit and recruit training environment.

And in the operation forces, as you know, we had the race issues and the race riots. [MCB] Camp Lejeune, [North Carolina,] was not a safe place to walk at night. The most pitiful thing of the whole thing was some of these thugs were taking over the barracks. After darkness, it was the guy with the knife and the dope who was running the barracks. The UAs [unauthorized absences] and the desertion rates were enormously high, as you are well aware, and the worst part of all was that a lot of the guys who were deserting were good guys who just could not stand the corrupt environment that existed on the Marine Corps bases throughout the country and overseas.

Frank: The officers and senior staff NCOs didn't know what to do.  
 Trainor: They didn't know what to do . . . just didn't know what to do.  
 Frank: Well, you couldn't know it.  
 Trainor: Nobody, no! We had to go through this thing. And of course there were all the affirmative action steps that were taken in terms of the race problems.  
 Frank: Project 100,000 and so on?  
 Trainor: Well, that was another thing that brought a lot of trash in. We became a social experiment for the do-gooders around the country, losing sight of what the purpose of the military forces were. It was just a horror story, and we were losing good NCOs by the legion; we were losing good troopers by the legion, who, if they stayed around, got out. They certainly weren't going to reenlist. We were losing good officers by the legion. We were in sad shape within the Marine Corps. The traditional discipline had broken down. We were just infested with this cancer, and it started right with the recruiting business.

An attempt was made to turn this around, and a general officer, by the name of [Brigadier General Edward B.] Meyer, "Ed" Meyer, was put in charge of the recruiting business. He was given carte blanche to select any person within the Marine Corps that he wanted to go out on recruiting duty. I was one of the unfortunates that were picked. Sure enough, I got a set of orders to go up to New York, to the 1st [Marine Corps] District, which was headquartered at Garden City in Long Island, and had the recruiting and Reserve responsibilities for the northeastern part of the United States. [The] 1st District was the worst in the country.

Frank: That's what I was going to ask you.

Trainor: Absolutely the worst in the country. It had the worst attrition record, the worst cheating record of any of the districts. In addition to that, it was not only pulling in trash, but it was also having to face the area where there was the greatest antimilitarism in the country. The New England states were very clearly antimilitary. So it was a very, very sad situation.

The guy that was up there, the district director, was one of the brightest guys I've ever had the honor to know. He was also one of the most profane men that I've also known. He went up there as [I] was starting to turn the 1st District around from being the worst in the country to the best in the country over a short period of time. But let me tell you, I simply built on that which had come before me. The fellow that was up there was . . . [interruption in recording]

The district director was [Colonel] Alexander [P.] McMillan, and he was one of the brightest guys that I've ever had the privilege to know; as I say, also on of the most profane guys. The language that would come out of that fellow was horrendous. But he understood the problem. He recognized that recruiting was not simply taking orders; that recruiting was akin to nothing the Marines had ever done before, and it was far more closely related to being a soap salesman or a shoe salesman than it was to being an operational and combat ready Marine, and that the recruiters out there had to operate the same way as salesmen did. He looked to industry

to learn the techniques, the sales techniques. He made great use of J. Walter Thompson, the advertising agency, to learn marketing skills and to set up what he referred to as systematic recruiting, which is now standard throughout the Marine Corps, where you didn't do things haphazardly; you did things in a systematic fashion. He started to develop this system.

That was fortunately matched by a change in the objectives of the Marine Corps. We had a new Commandant come in, [General Louis H.] "Lou" Wilson [Jr.], and Lou Wilson was going to put quality before quantity and he was going to clean up the Marine Corps' act.

Frank: The "rose garden" business.

Trainor: And he did it with a vengeance. He was going to hold the recruiters responsible for quality, and we were not going to worry about quantity. So therefore, he had the people that were out on recruiting duty had the full support of Lou Wilson, and we started to make the changes.

Frank: Poor recruiters were really under the gun. Here's a guy who's got a good record, a staff NCO whose got the pressure of quotas, and he can see his whole career going down the tubes.

Trainor: There were a lot of good NCOs and a lot of good officers whose careers went down the tubes. Draconian measures were necessary if we were going to clean up the act. They were held responsible. There was the judgment made if a fellow just was not made for recruiting duty—and there are a lot of people that aren't (they're not comfortable with it)—then they would be relieved, but they would not be relieved for cause. But if a guy was capable of doing the job and he didn't do the job or cheated on the job, which was more likely, then he would be relieved for cause. Now there's obviously always a gray area there and a lot of innocent people were hurt. But if we were to solve the problem in the recruiting world and therefore in the recruit training world—and I'll come to that shortly—it meant that you had to be absolutely ruthless. A guy produced or out he went, regardless of the reason.

We had a saying at that time: "The only business in the Marine Corps where you say to a man, 'How are you doing?' and he can tell you how he's doing by his statistics is in the recruiting business." So we started to develop systematic recruiting. When I went up there, I became the deputy director to [Colonel Donald E.] "Don" Newton, who relieved Alexander Pat McMillan. Newton and I continued to work on the systematic recruiting approach. Then Don Newton left and I became the director and continued with this systematic recruiting.

Frank: You were director of Reserve and recruiting.

Trainor: Yes, at that time you had responsibility for the Reserve units up there also, not only for their recruiting but also for the administration of the I&Is [inspector-instructors]. All that changed a little later on.

The way we went about the thing, the systematic recruiting, was taking a page right out of industry's books where you set your goals and your objectives, and you figured what was necessary to meet those goals and objectives. For example, to get on enlistment you might require that

you conduct 17 interviews. Now, to get 17 interviews with a prospect, it may take you 100 telephone calls. So therefore, you have a formula to use. It was arbitrary. We would look at each one of the recruiters and see what his results were. So I would say, "Okay, for you, Frank, to get one guy you have to have these 17 interviews and to get those 17 interviews you have to make 100 telephone calls." This is during the course of a month.

"Therefore, we want you to get two candidates, two prospects, two recruits this month. So you have to make 200 telephone calls to get your 34 interviews to get you 2 candidates." Then he would do that. Now maybe the guy ends up making 300 telephone calls to get the 2. All right, that's fine. Now that's your new formula. You see how the thing worked? They had something to go on.

We worked at the thing, also systematizing their files. Instead of a guy having something written on a piece of paper and stuffed in his back pocket, we had the files. We got the high school lists, which was difficult because of the Privacy Act and the antimilitary attitude of most educators. We would use the good offices of the Marine Corps Reserve and influential people to get these high school lists. And you'd build up your basic population of candidates within the recruiter's area of operation. Say it didn't work this time. Okay, you wouldn't get rid of that guy's name. You'd put him in a file for callback, because the kid gets out of high school and goes out and he can't get a job. Well, you call him back in three months, and now maybe he's getting a little hungry. Maybe you'll get him back in.

Also you have to learn about the psychology of the neighborhood. For example, in Maine during potato-picking time, you weren't going to get anybody to come in the Marine Corps. However, at that time we would reduce the quotas for the people in those areas, which would recognize that and increase somebody else's quotas. At Christmas-time, right after Christmas, it was a pretty good time to get somebody from Maine, because the weather was lousy and you'd be able to advertise the sunny weather of South Carolina.

So all of these techniques were introduced in a systematic fashion. It was a very elaborate and complex system, and the recruiting officers had to know it. The business of putting an officer in there—in charge of a recruiting station—and going by the dictum, "Gunny, put up that flag pole" and assuming it was going to be done, that didn't work. The recruiter had to know more about it; the recruiting officer had to know more about it than the recruiter, so that he could check to make sure that this guy was doing the right thing. We would hold him responsible.

We would talk to the recruiters at least once a day, normally twice a day, and keep their feet to the fire; pressure, pressure, pressure. But it was realistic pressure. Some of the c——p that was going on where recruiters would be put on "hours," it was the most ridiculous thing in the world. Hours meant that if a guy wasn't making his numbers, he was told to stay in the office from 0400 'til 2100, and he had to come in on

weekends. But all you were doing was demoralizing the poor guy, see. We knocked all of that sort of stuff out. Little by little, we started to make some progress.

We changed all the recruiting substations from the trash areas. For example, in New York City there were 23 substations. Most of them were in the ghettos. Why? Because that's where they could get the recruits. But they weren't the quality that we wanted. Look, the good people that come into the Marine Corps are not the kids that are graduating from the fancy high schools, who were going on to college. The people that we wanted to get were the kids of the white-collar workers and the blue-collar workers. They were the ones that would come in the Marine Corps and not from the ghetto schools where they were babysitting thugs. So we simply reoriented our efforts toward the blue- and the white-collar high schools and got the substations out into those areas.

We had recruiters . . . now remember, many of the NCOs at the time were, generally speaking, of poor quality. Why? Because we had been going through this problem ever since the beginning of the '70s, and the people who were staying in were people being promoted to corporal and sergeant, who, in a quality Marine Corps such as we have today, would never stand a chance. In fact, many probably wouldn't even be enlisted. But at least they had clean records. So we did not have the best recruiters in the world. Most of them were non-high school graduates; most of them had a bad memory of high school and were afraid to go in the high school. They were more comfortable recruiting in the pool halls than they were in the high schools.

So one of the ways that we got over that, for example—and the Marine Corps Reserve just did a terrific job—we established family councils made up of influential former Marines or Marine affiliates within each of the communities. This was the recruiting officer's responsibility to get these guys together, and they would be the recruiter. I'll give you an example. They would say, "You're Ben Frank. You're a noted lawyer in this community. You're a man of reputation and stature. Now I've got Sergeant Fink over here who dropped out of high school in his sophomore year, generally speaking, is inarticulate in the presence of authority, [and] had an inordinate fear of being in the principal's office because he had been there under unfavorable circumstances in the past." So what we would do is we would call you and say, "Hey, Ben, how about taking Sergeant Fink over to Gompers High School and introduce him to the principal and give him a hand in setting up Marine Day there in the high school as part of Career Day activities for the high school." So you go over there with this Marine. The principal is very deferential to you, because he's a little concerned about you. You've got some whack in the community. Then you introduce Sergeant Fink. Sergeant Fink now has had the way eased for him. Things like this started to turn it around little by little, little by little. Recruiters began to get a salesman mentality.



But we still had the attrition problem down at Parris Island, because the drill instructors down there, many of whom were NCOs that could not make the drill field today—so you see what happened? We had compounded our problem—and who were psychologically unfit to be DIs [drill instructors], were thumpers. These people were still looking at the people coming from the districts and the attrition rate continued to be high. Frequently the drill instructors were thumping guys who really were pretty good potential Marines because they were different from the trash that they were used to.

But this sort of thing could not be cleaned up overnight. It was going to be a long struggle. I wrote an article for the *Marine Corps Gazette* later on after I'd made brigadier general, and I was down at the recruit depot when we had turned the corner. It was called "The Issue is No Longer in Doubt." It was published in the *Gazette*, and it described all of these things that I'm talking about now. General [Robert H.] Barrow, as the Commandant, and who was very antirecruiter because of his experience on the drill field, until he became the director of Manpower, and then he saw both sides of the picture, he asked me if I would write this thing—because I was in the unique position down at Parris Island having served as a district director and also having served on the recruit training side of the house—to try to explain what that problem was and how we transitioned out of it. That article is still being used today when people go to the drill field and also to recruiting duty to remind them how bad things were and never let it get that way again.

But with Wilson's backing to go for quality, with the initiatives of people like Pat McMillan in coming up with systematic recruiting, and then selling the idea of systematic recruiting to the recruiters, who resisted it tremendously. They didn't like it because it held their feet to the fire, and you had prima facie evidence of their performance, and they couldn't do hip-pocket recruiting. We did it within the 1st District and were able then to sell it throughout the country, and then we employed IBM or Xerox, I guess it was, to conduct recruiting courses, which were marketing and salesmanship courses. And we started to put our best people on the drill field; we started to put our best people, even at the risk of the FMF [Fleet Marine Force], our best people in the recruiting stations, and we started to turn the corner, ever so slowly. But I think by 1977, and certainly by 1978, the corner had been turned.

Frank: How about the new system by which the commanders of the depots were made responsible for recruiting?

Trainor: Okay. Now that was, again, part of the recovery program. Before we got to that. We also had the problem of the recruiters just making the numbers, and then a lot of the people he knew wouldn't make it through recruit training. So we now started to hold the recruiter responsible for the guy that he put in all the way through boot camp. So every recruit that went to Parris Island was identified with his recruiter's social security number and also associated with his drill instructor's social security number. So if the

kid turned out to be a lemon—and I [am] talking about a lemon in that he was a bad actor or he had been recruited illegally (the recruiter hid something from the records)—we knew who the recruiter was. Subsequently, when a kid left recruit training and ended up getting into serious trouble in the FMF, we also knew who his drill instructor was. When you saw the same drill instructor's number or the same recruiter's number popping up too many times, you knew you had yourself a problem. So that was another one of the self-checks that we introduced into the system.

The battle that existed between the drill field and the recruiting world showed that it was necessary to bring the two of them together. Because it was “Who shot John?” with the recruiter saying, “I’m sending you all of these marvelous people and you drill instructors are ruining them,” and the drill instructors saying, “You’re sending me trash and I have to get rid of them.” You had people with the bad attitude, commanding generals down at the recruit depots with a terrible attitude toward the recruiters as personified by General Barrow, who thought the recruiters were a bunch of bums.

Frank: Would this be . . .

Trainor: Because he saw it only from the recruit depot standpoint.

Frank: That’s right; sure, he’d been down there.

Trainor: Yes, he just saw it from that one perspective. So the decision was made—and a good decision was made—to pull it all together; that the CG [commanding general] of the recruit depot, who was the gent responsible to the operating forces for turning out the finished product, he was required to buy the fabric, get the fabric out on the market, bring that fabric into the factory, and change the fabric into the finished product and then give it out to the market. One manufacturer responsible for the recruiting and the recruit training. Therefore, there could be no finger pointing because it was only one guy’s responsibility. And that was the way to go. This was resisted by a lot of people. It was resisted by the people at Headquarters Marine Corps who said that the officer who was running the recruit depot doesn’t know that much about recruiting, and it’s an occult art. And I’ll agree with that. So the solution was “We’ll just take trained recruiting officers and put them down as a special staff to the CG of the depot.” In fact, then the assistant depot commander usually was also a guy out of the recruiting environment. I was the first to go down to Parris Island. And Bill Cryan, Colonel [William M.] “Bill” Cryan, who knew the recruiting business from the Headquarters Marine Corps standpoint like the palm of his hand, was made the chief of staff for recruiting to the CG. So that solved all the complaints and arguments up at Headquarters Marine Corps.

The CG took over the recruiting and the recruit training and all of the finger pointing started to cease. With the emphasis on quality, with the emphasis on systematic recruiting, with the better screening of the drill instructors, with the elimination of the potential that we had punishment

activities—which we had at Parris Island for abuse (the motivation courses and all that sort of stuff)—little by little it started to turn around. But it was tough.

The recruiting business . . . I spent so many hours on the road, so many days on the road. I practically didn't know my family. But you had to do it. You had to psychologically get the recruiters to believe in systematic recruiting and believe in themselves. You had to work the communities to help the Marines. You had to fight the politicians who were frequently afraid to confront the antimilitarists and give us access to the schools. Even dealing with the [American] Civil Liberties Union, getting them on our side, saying that you know "We're being denied our, the government's, right to have access to show opportunities available to students in high schools to a career option," and so forth. This was a go-on, stay-on job. You get target fixation at the thing. As you can tell just from my voice in talking about this thing, it's been a long time but I am still fired up over the whole recruit process. And the whole thing is work. [The] 1st District came from last place to first place, and I'm very proud of that and very proud of the part that I played.

Then I was selected for brigadier general when I was on the job out there.

Frank: Recruiting is very responsible for the failure of the Marine 4-F [recruiting program] [inaudible].

Trainor: Yes, yes.

Frank: No question about it.

Trainor: So they were exciting days, frustrating days, demoralizing days, but also some of the most splendid days of my life when you started to see it happen, and the quality started to come in. It was just great.

Frank: Living and working up in the 1st District, that's a high-powered pressure cooker place, especially since there are so many former Marines in the New York area there. You know the Club 21 group and this type of thing.

Trainor: Yes, yes.

Frank: They would like to take you in to camp.

Trainor: Yes, but I had no problem with those people. I have to tell you, the Sardi group—those were folks that had a [Reserve Brigadier General Melvin L.] "Mel" Krulewitch and people like that—they had a lot of clout much earlier. They were very powerful and very helpful to General Wilson when he was up there in the recruiting business.

Frank; That's right, years ago.

Trainor: Years ago. But by the time I got there, a lot of that group had aged and they were kind of falling out of the pattern. However, I'll say this, that I got nothing but maximum cooperation from that group and from the Reserve establishment in New York. I developed a great deal of respect for the Reserves. They were, for the most part, enormously helpful, enormously dedicated people, and very professional people both in terms of their Marine Corps jobs and in terms of whatever job that they had in civilian life. We would have consolidated lists of these people, known

who they were, and [made] use of them. They were always eager and helpful. So they played a part in the marvelous turnaround of the recruiting problem.

The only ones that I found to be a pain in the butt were the Marine Corps League, and God love them, they're all great guys and their hearts are like gold, but for the recruiting service they weren't much help. They were always asking for something and very seldom giving anything. I always had to have color guards for this and gun details for that. Then when you turn around and ask them to give you a huss [break] on some of the recruiting projects you want from them, you get all sorts of promises and no action. So they were . . . but that went with the territory. But they were good guys. I loved them; I still love them. I'm a permanent member of the Marine Corps League. If you took into account that you weren't going to get much out of the Marine Corps League, that it was the officers, the Reserve officers, and MCROA [Marine Corps Reserve Officer Association] and people that are affiliated just in general with the Marine Corps by virtue of hav[ing] been in the Marines or just liking the Marine Corps, these were the people that were going to help you in the recruiting business.

Frank: Did you ever get involved with the group that met every spring up at the National Guard camp?

Trainor: The [New York] naval militia, yes.

Frank: No, [unintelligible].

Trainor: This was the naval militia. [Marine Corps Reserve officer Patrick] "Pat" Garvey was a big player in this.

Frank: What's the name of the National Guard camp up in New York?

Trainor: Oh, at [New York National Guard's] Camp Smith?

Frank: No, [unintelligible].

Trainor: Fort Drum, [New York]?

Frank: No, not that far up.

Trainor: Smith was at Poughkeepsie.

Frank: Poughkeepsie, Peekskill . . .

Trainor: Peekskill, right.

Frank: A day of shooting and beer and . . .

Trainor: Yes, yes.

Frank: . . . and stuff.

Trainor: Well, I never got involved with them in that sense. But the naval militia would have a conference in the Adirondacks or the Catskills, [New York,] usually at one of the Borscht [Belt] circuit hotels like Grossinger's, every fall. Through the good offices of Pat Garvey, the Marine Corps would get a terrific play at that sort of thing. We would be able to elicit a lot of support in New York state from some of the heavies as a result of our presence up there.

Frank: I'm trying to think. I was at Marine Corps Day up there. It's gotten so big they invite the Commandant up for it now.

Trainor: Yes. Well the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] . . .

Trainor: FBI, former Marines, FBI . . .  
 Trainor: They have it yes.  
 Frank: There was a guy who was a former Marine who was . . .  
 Trainor: Larry Flynn.  
 Frank: Well [unintelligible].  
 Trainor: Brigadier general.  
 Frank: This is the guy who is security for the New York Telephone Company, Joe . . . There was quite a crew and of course, you had VTU 1-1 [Volunteer Training Unit 1-1].  
 Trainor: Yes.  
 Frank: Public relations . . .  
 Trainor: Yes, with Gladys McParton [?].  
 Frank: And Gladys, sure.  
 Trainor: Those people were helpful on the periphery. But see, they weren't sufficiently structured to do the sort of thing to fit into the systematic recruiting mold.  
 Frank: No.  
 Trainor: Because my point was, you had to have a plan for everything. You had to have an objective and milestones, and the people that came off the wall, we were beneficiaries and these were nice to have—these were bonuses. But you had to have a plan if you were going to be able to predict what you were going to do and have goals to try to meet, and then if you didn't meet them, figure out why.  
 That required, in terms of the Reserve community, the same thing, and the friends of the Marine Corps, the same thing as it required in the recruiting community, and that was a systematic approach. So that's why the family council formed, so the family council would have objectives. They would have plans. And I would hold them, even though I had no authority over them, I would hold them responsible. And by virtue of force of personality, dress them down and make them feel bad if they fell down on their goals through their own fault. I'd just make these guys feel bad. So then they would go out and bust their tails to try to make up for it. But you had to do it in a systematic way. Anything you got, then, from the fellows on the periphery, I always considered that to be gravy. But I never counted on it.  
 Frank: Of course, the other thing you had to worry about was, like the Marine Corps League or the New York chapter of the 1st [Marine] Division Association or any of these other things, was doing something which would embarrass the Marine Corp, which would reflect on the recruiting method.  
 Trainor: Yes. Now, I was fortunate, during my tenure up there that I never had anything of that nature occur. I had some potentials, which I nipped in the bud. But see, once again, having the network of—I don't want [to use] the term "informants"—but having the network of contacts you would, early on, get an indication that somebody had a well-intentioned effort that he was going to mount, and you knew that the somebody who was putting

this thing on was letting his mouth overload his abilities. You'd be able to nip the thing in the bud early on. Otherwise, some guy would be putting some Las Vegas, [Nevada,] night or something for the Marine Corps, and cripes, the liberal press would take you apart. It was all well-intentioned, but it would be disastrous. But with the network of contacts we had, which we were always kind of building on, usually you got an indication of that beforehand.

I would say that if any district director who was running a district got caught short, he couldn't give an Italian shrug. He could look right at the failure of his own setup. That was one of the things you always had to keep in mind, and the safeguard was, as I say, the network. The family council played a large role in that sort of thing. If you were smart, you didn't get caught in that. If you weren't smart, you would get caught.

Frank: Yes, you'd get taken to court or taken to . . .

Trainor: Yes. So you had to be watching everything.

Frank: Taken to the camp without . . .

Trainor: What you were doing on recruiting duty as a district director, the same as the recruiter, really had nothing to do with anything you'd ever done within the Marine Corps. You were running a corporation but a corporation with all sorts of sensitivities that a normal corporation doesn't have to deal with. You had to be a man for all seasons, a jack-of-all-trades.

On top of that, if you happened to be up in the 1st District, you were also a landlord because the district headquarters was a building; it's the only district headquarters in the country where the building belonged to the Marine Corps. It was in Garden City, Long Island. We owned the building. How the Corps got it, I'm not so sure. It goes back to World War II. But we owned the building, and I was the landlord for the building. I had Naval Investigative Service, FAA [Federal Aviation Administration], [and] all sorts of federal tenants within the building. It was also headquarters of 2/25, USMCR [U.S. Marine Corps Forces Reserve]. So I was a landlord who had to worry about the roof leaking and the poor janitorial services, because I was forced to accept a minority contract from the Small Business Administration from some guy in Philadelphia, [Pennsylvania,] who didn't even own a business. He ran his business out of a telephone booth. All of these problems went with it.

But I have to tell you, Ben, it was so much fun. I loved every minute of that job and thrived on it obviously. I was picked up for general not because of that, but certainly I wouldn't have been picked up for general if I hadn't succeeded in it.

Frank: Well, that will be a good place to go to next time—PI [Parris Island].

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: And see what the results were of your recruiting. Very good, Mick.

End SESSION VI

## U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lieutenant General Bernard E. "Mick" Trainor, USMC (Ret)  
Interviewer: Mr. Benis M. Frank  
Place: Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, DC  
Date: 22 April 1986

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### SESSION VII

Frank: We talked last time about your tour at 1st District.  
Trainor: Right.  
Frank: The problem that you faced with recruiting and so on, and now you were selected for BG [brigadier general], and your first assignment, interestingly enough, is down as assistant CG of the [recruit] depot at Parris Island, [South Carolina,] to see what you'd been doing, right or wrong.  
Trainor: Yes, now . . .  
Frank: And that's in March of '76.  
Trainor: [In] '76, right. As I mentioned, I was hoping I would go to the FMF, like all Marines, but [Major General Arthur J.] "Jake" Poillon was the CG down there and we had just consolidated the recruiting and the recruit training and established the position of the ADC [assistant depot commander]. He prevailed upon the Commandant to send me down there.  
There was some discussion before the establishment of the ADC position as to whether it should be a deputy commanding general or an assistant depot commander. The concept of the deputy would be that he would be the deputy for recruiting. But the Marine Corps wisely, in my judgment, decided to go for the assistant depot commander so that you would, in fact, be the alter ego of the depot commander and be dealing with things beyond the recruiting business. In the process, they established an assistant chief of staff for recruiting, and he was on a par, in a sense, with the recruit training regiment.  
So I went down there, and Jake and I had known each other, and we worked well together. I don't know how well you know Jake Poillon or whether you've cut an oral history with him, but I used to call him "the mad Huguenot." He did come from Huguenot forebears, and he had a temper like no man I have ever seen. He would absolutely become irrational when he became mad. Sometimes he would just tear people up and down. The general's secretary used to give me a buzz on the squawk box when Jake was going into one of his tirades against one of the officers. I would just kind of mosey on down and mosey into the office and just my presence tended to calm him down. It kind of distracted him. But I have never met a man with such a temper.  
We had a very fine working relationship. Jake was primarily a deskman. He was always working statistics and things of this nature,

which, of course, abounded down at the recruit depot: attrition rates, abuse rates, and all of these things. So, in a sense, he left me free to kind of float around the drill field and of course to make a lot of trips out to the three districts that were east of the Mississippi [River] under his purview. I enjoyed loved it, loved every minute of it. Having gone through recruit training in 1946, I had kind of a nostalgic feeling for Parris Island. I had never been back to Parris Island since I had left there after recruit training back in 1946. So that was quite an experience.

I got along very well with most of the drill instructors. We were in a period of crisis, which I described in our last session, and the reforms that were taking place (the no abuse and strict compliance with the program of instruction and the very stringent code of conduct) were being resisted by the drill instructors. There was a feeling within the Marine Corps, both at the depot and also I think throughout the Corps, that recruit training was the business of the drill instructors and the officers were there to kind of take the heat if problems arose and to generally give direction but stay the hell out of the business of making Marines; that was the job of NCOs and DIs. Be that as it may, it just wasn't going to work. The Commandant, General [Louis H.] Wilson, was under tremendous fire in Washington, [DC,] because of the drill field abuses, which had grown out of the poor quality of the people who were going through recruit training and the frustration of the drill instructors—the fact that they were overworked, too many recruits. [Interruption in recording] We had had the incident of . . . not [Corporal Matthew] McKeon, but. . .

Frank: [Robert M.] McTureous was it?

Trainor: No. A youngster from Texas out in . . .

Frank: San Diego.

Trainor: . . . out in San Diego who was beaten to death with the pugil sticks. That had raised an outcry, and also we had an incident down at Parris Island that was quite serious with a drill instructor shooting a recruit in kind of an intimidation exercise, plus various other lesser types of abuses: youngsters being chained to a stanchion, such as happened out at San Diego also. Then we had a drowning in the swimming pool.

The heat and the focus of attention in the Congress were on the Marine Corps to clean up its act. The Commandant was under great pressure, and I think it's literally safe to say that the very existence of the Marine Corps was being threatened. We were being called into question as to our efficacy and how American youngsters could be treated worse than criminals on Devil's Island and consider this as an American institution. The hierarchy of the Marine Corps was aware of this, and certainly General Wilson was enormously sensitive to it.

But I'll tell you, the drill instructors were not aware of it. They lived in a world of their own, and they had been brought up on a diet of abuse when they went through recruit training, well-intentioned for the most part. But what happened, a youngster would be picked to be a drill instructor and his only role model was his own drill instructor. And no



matter what was told [to] him in Drill Instructor School, when they get out on the drill field, the other DIs would tell them, "Okay, that's the way the officers tell you it's going to be. But really they're winking. They want us to go about it and do it the way we've always done it, in making Marines," which was built upon a philosophy of fear and intimidation rather than developing positive leadership. So our argument was, "Well, you guys turn out marvelous recruits, but you don't turn out very good Marines." What we want to do is turn this around and develop a more positive leadership approach. It would be firm but it would be fair, and there'd be none of this nonsense that would occur.

And you had different types of abuses. You had the guy that you could really forgive, and that's the poor fellow who was just so overworked with back to back platoons, maybe he had some family problems, and maybe he had some recalcitrant recruits . . .

Frank: That was supposed to have been all straightened out after Ribbon Creek, though.

Trainor: No. Well, like everything else when you have a case where you have a keeper and keepee, the keeper is going to be corrupted. We just allowed this to happen, and when these events, the McKeon . . .

Frank: Yes, McKeon.

Trainor: Well, there was McKeon, but I'm still trying to think of the incident from Texas. When that thing occurred, it was as though Ribbon Creek had happened . . .

Frank: All over again.

Trainor: . . . just about a month previously, when in fact there was a 10-year gap. But the press and the people of this country failed to make a distinction on that. It was as though we had never cleaned up our act. We had cleaned up our act, but we allowed it to become corrupted again.

But you had the sort of fellow who literally and simply lost his temper and did something that he regretted the second he had done it. Okay, that sort of thing was understandable. We could mechanically fix that by making sure that the stress level on the guy was lowered. And we did, in fact, do just that, and it worked satisfactorily. Then the next fellow that you had was the guy . . .

Frank: Sadist?

Trainor: No, who was absolutely convinced, convinced in his mind that this was the way you . . .

Frank: Make Marines.

Trainor: . . . should make a Marine. Well, that sort of fellow either shaped up or shipped out. Then you had the sadist. This is a guy who really took joy in the fact that he was exercising his power and authority over others and making others suffer. The improved psychological testing for the drill instructors was designed to weed those fellows out. Okay. But then you got the fellow that I just absolutely couldn't abide, and whenever I came across him I moved heaven and earth to make sure that he received his just deserts and that was the fellow that I called the "clown." The clown was a

fellow who was a drill instructor who was so uncertain of his own manhood that he had to devise techniques to entertain his other drill instructors so that he could run to the staff NCO club or run over to his fellow DIs and say, “Hey, guess what I did today. Guess what I did to those turkeys today,” and then describe some idiotic, childish thing that he had done. It was as though he said, “Look ma, look at me. Look how funny and big I am.” I couldn’t abide that son of a gun.

But at any rate, they were the classifications of abusers, in my judgment. But the resistance! The resistance to the reforms down there was enormous. Like all NCOs, they’d give you a hearty “Aye, aye” and click their heels and look like they’d stepped out of a bandbox, but underneath it was silent contempt and resistance. And they would, in fact, influence the series officer.

Now the series officers were young officers, and the way they would operate . . . some of the series officers, because they were so unsure of themselves in their leadership role, would actually emulate and use some of the drill instructors as their role models. So they became just as bad as the drill instructors.

There had been the practice of these youngsters, coming right out of Basic School, going down there, and that was wrong. The Commandant made a very, very fine decision. He gave first priority to the drill fields for quality people coming back from the FMF. Lieutenants who had served as troop leaders in the FMF, the top cream of the crop, came to [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] San Diego and Parris Island. These fellows had already established their own bona fides to the Marine Corps and in their own mind. So therefore, they would not be subject to this sort of hero worshiping that the inexperienced officers would have. Of course, they were schooled very thoroughly, before they went on the drill field, about what we were going to do. So that was very beneficial.

But the great danger there was, what the drill instructors would do would be to try to compromise them. They would try to get a series officer to allow them to get away with something or involve the series officer in some minor, little infraction of the POI [program of instruction]. Once you were a little bit pregnant they had you, because the next time it would be something bigger, and then when the series officer would come down on the drill instructor, all of the sudden he gets one of these “But lieutenant, when we did such and such, you seemed to think that was all right.” So they were compromised. So we had to warn the officers about that.

You may think I’m being very hard on the drill instructors, and I am. And I had a rule of thumb that applied to both recruiters and drill instructors: you don’t trust either one of them. A recruiter and a drill instructor cannot be trusted; he will lie, cheat, and steal. Now that’s a harsh indictment. But I loved them; I loved both of them because they were both guys who were busting their tails to do the right thing for the Corps as they saw it. I’m so harsh on them because it’s simply an expression of man’s frailty and fallibility. We put them in very difficult

positions, and human nature drove them to do the things that they did. So what we had to do is to ensure that they got absolutely no slack that you held their feet to the fire at all times and held them completely responsible at all times. In that way, you were overcoming their natural concupiscence—a little bit of philosophy behind the way we operated down there.

Well, there was absolutely no question that Jake Poillon was not going to allow any sort of abuse to take place. We went on a terror campaign with the drill instructors and the senior NCOs to get the place squared away. The first ones he held responsible were the senior NCOs: the sergeant majors and the first sergeants and gunnery sergeants. Poillon took them to task and told them that most of them were sitting on their duffs, wasting their time, just waiting out their 30 years, and he would have none of it. Either they performed and they played the role of role model and they got the NCOs squared away, or they were going to go. And he was serious about it. He had every drill instructor and senior NCO into the theater and read them the riot act and backed up his remarks with action.

[Colonel] Gary Wilder was the regimental commander, and [Colonel Peter A.] “Pete” Wickwire was the regimental executive officer. And they were 100 percent behind him. We had three very fine battalion commanders, and little by little the message started to get across. But the complaints still continued, and I remember complaints about the quality of the recruits, although at this point we had turned the corner under General Wilson, and we had tied the recruiter by social security number to each one of his recruits. The quality we were betting at Parris Island was really good. Now you still had a certain percentage, but the problems that had been endemic previously were long gone.

General Wilson came down there to visit—I’ll never forget it. He got all the drill instructors together in the theater, and only the drill instructors. It was almost like an exercise in hysteria. All of their frustrations bubble out. They knew that they were being held in a straitjacket by the command, and they were convinced in their own mind that they were getting bad quality recruits. One fellow raised the issue with General Wilson, who played them along, played them along, trolling for complaints, and pretty soon it just spread throughout the entire theater. All of these DIs are jumping up, each one interrupting the other, in a tumble of expression over the poor quality recruits and how, my God, they’re trying but the quality is terrible, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And General Wilson took all this in, and turned and said to Jake Poillon, “Why aren’t you telling me these things, Jake? Here you’re telling me that the quality of recruits . . .” It was absolutely a marvelous performance, and he was playacting all the time.

So he said, “All right gentlemen. That’s a very serious complaint. I never realized that things were so bad down here. Now what I want you to do, it is now 1100. I want you to go back to your platoons, and I want you

to get all the misfits that you have. March them up to the parking lot in front of the depot headquarters.” And he turned to General Poillon, and he said, “Jake, I want you to get every colonel—I don’t care what he’s doing—I want every colonel on this base out there. They will go down the line, and they will interview each one of these misfits with the drill instructor to ascertain whether these people were improperly recruited. We will do this at exactly 1130. Now everybody get out and go about your business.”

Well, it was just amazing to see. It was amazing to see General Wilson standing out there; General Poillon was standing out there; I was standing out there; chief of staff, recruiting; recruit training regiment commander; the battalion commanders; all the company commanders; all the series officers; every colonel on the depot; and there were scads of civilians—the firehouse people and the warehouse people—all out there waiting to see these droves of troops march up. There were about three drill instructors that marched up with maybe six recruits. But you could see drill instructors hiding behind every building and behind every palmetto tree looking. It was all a lot of guff and talk out of these guys. It turned out that the six or so that were brought up were indeed illegally recruited, but the recruiting service had already caught it, and these people were already being processed for discharge.

It was just marvelous. I tell you, I had so much respect for General Wilson after that as being a master leader and a master psychologist. That took the wind out of the drill instructors’ sails, and some of the resistance that we were receiving at the recruit depot to the reforms just started to evaporate from that point on.

But in the meantime, we were phasing out the old drill instructors, and we had this intensive training program for the new fellows that were coming in. But we recognized that that problem would not be solved until we had gone through a generation of Marines who had been trained under the reformed program, and they cycled back as drill instructors. Again, their role model would have been their own drill instructor, but it would have been a positive model rather than a negative model.

So it was a great experience, and it was a tremendous lesson in the psychology of man. But we had to hold a hand on the throttle very firmly throughout, and as Ron Moss relieved me as the ADC, and the lesson that I left with him, I said, “Just don’t trust them. If we relax our guard for a second, we’ll be right back to Ribbon Creek, the same as we were after the [Private Lynn E.] McClure incident.” That’s the name I was trying to remember.

Frank: McClure, yes.

Trainer: So the training remained very, very tough, but it was constructive stuff. It was none of the idiocy that you experienced when you went through boot camp and I experienced when I went through. It also took into account that there were different types of people—particularly the PT [physical training] program. The PT program was designed so that everybody was

stretched to and a little bit beyond their limits, so that they had a goal to work for. So you could have been a decathlon athlete and go[ne] down there, and the program for you would require you to do a little bit more than you could actually do. And the fellow who wasn't in good shape, the same for him, but it was on a much lower level. So the whole point was, I don't care about the fitness you're at; you're going to get at a better level of fitness. So that was enormously useful.

We, of course, doubled the number of officers that were with each recruit platoon, doubled the number of drill instructors. So all the stresses that existed in the past, which might have led to recruit abuse, were pretty much eliminated. In the meantime, the quality continued to improve, improve, and improve.

But then we had the problem of attrition. We would have anywhere between 13 and 14 percent attrition, and it didn't make a hill of beans whether the quality was good or the quality was bad. To my knowledge, to this very day, the attrition rate remains somewhere in the 11 to 14 percent category. There just seems to be kind of an unwritten thing, some sort of aggressions' law, that there shall be 11 to 14 percent attrition regardless of the quality of the recruits.

Frank: That used to be much less, but that was because Headquarters Marine Corps said, "You won't attrite more than five percent."

Trainor: That's right. At times there had been fiats. But that was wrong because we were letting poor . . .

Frank: Poor people . . .

Trainor: Yes. So you had to let the thing float.

Frank: [The 24th Commandant] General [Leonard F.] Chapman [Jr.], I think, changed it.

Trainor: You had to let it float, and you had to constantly adjust and that's why there was a very thorough screening process before a fellow returned to civilian life to see, in fact, whether he should be attrited out or not.

Frank: Was a study ever done on the guys who are attrited out, how it affected them, afterwards?

Trainor: No, but we went to pains to ensure that the kid, when he went out, went out with a pretty good attitude towards the Marine Corps because a lot of people would go out and they would bad-mouth the Marine Corps. Let me tell you, that's bad for recruiting. So we had a decompression period for them wherein they were counseled and so forth. And they ended up, or most of them ended up, admitting their own inability to cope with matters and holding themselves responsible as opposed to holding the Marine Corps responsible. We always encouraged them to go back to their recruiters and check in and also inform the recruiter of it. We wanted to lessen the impact in the civilian community and that seemed to work pretty well.

Women, the women posed no problem. The quality was good. More women wanted to get in than we had room for. [Lieutenant Colonel] Gail [M.] Reals ran the Woman Recruit Training Battalion, and she ran it

with superb efficiency and leadership. I had nothing but praise for the way the women's program was going. It never became a problem. It was not a squeaky wheel that required oil.

The recruiting was going well. Systematic recruiting, which I addressed in the last session, was established throughout the United States, and we were having the same problems with the 4th and 6th Districts that we had when we first installed it in the 1st District. People were fighting it. They were used to their back-pocket recruiting procedures, and doing the systematic recruiting required a lot of work. We'd end up with quality recruits, and it made it tough on the recruiters, who were used to just picking up trash out of the pool halls and the jailhouses. So we had to be fairly ruthless on both officers and NCOs in the recruiting service: a lot of reliefs, a lot of careers were ruined. But the same way that we had to take draconian measures on the drill field, we also had to take those in the recruiting service if we were ever going to get the Marine Corps healthy within a reasonable period of time. It was unfortunate that there was some wastage of the war in innocent people, in effect, being hurt, but that's the way it had to be, and I don't regret it one little bit.

Systematic recruiting then was becoming established, and we continued to follow [Colonel Alexander P.] "Pat" McMillan's idea of taking a page from business and industry on salesmanship and marketing and made great use of Xerox and J. Walter Thompson in setting up our training programs for the recruiters.

We got healthy and we have stayed healthy, and I am convinced that even if the . . . if the recruiting environment became bad again (and people said the recruiting environment would turn bad once the economy picked up), and I said, "I don't care if that happens or not. We have learned how to recruit, because we have learned how to be salesmen; we have learned how to sell iceboxes to the Eskimos. I don't care what the environment is. We are still going to be able to recruit quality people." I think the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and today we have a very fine economy, a booming economy, and our recruiting has never been better. So all the people who said that our success in recruiting was due to a bad economy were full of baloney. I am still convinced that no matter what happens, the Marine Corps will be able to quality recruit in the numbers required to maintain the Corps.

Since those days, the poor quality NCOs that were held onto in the Marine Corps, and in fact promoted because we had nobody else around, most of them are starting to phase out. The NCOs that we have now, the staff NCOs and the junior NCOs, are all of that quality group that have been coming for the last 10 or 12 years. I think that accounts for the high standards that we once again enjoy in the Marine Corps.

But lest we ever forget, the worst battle the Marine Corps was ever in, and the only one that we were nearly defeated in, was the battle of recruiting and the poor quality of Marines that we had in that time frame of roughly 1970 to 1974. We must never go through that again, and the

generation of leaders within the Marine Corps that we have now, and that we'll have in the future, best always go back and read about that battle. It may not be as exciting as Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima, [Japan,] or the Chosin Reservoir, [Korea,] but it's infinitely more important to the well-being of the Corps in the future.

Frank: I think, you know, I think that the economy does have something to say about Marines that are coming in, and I also think a lot of people coming in, the kids coming in, they want a challenge that they're not getting out in the civilian world.

Trainor: Well, I don't agree with you on the economy. I don't think the economy has the least bit to do with it. It's salesmanship. Guys were still selling burial insurance during the Depression. Whether the economy is good or the economy is bad, we offer something in the Marine Corps today. So even though the economy's good and you can get a job anywhere he wants right now—a bright young fellow—we offer him something in the Marine Corps and one of the things is what you put your finger on in your second comment, and that is the challenge. There is excitement in the Marine Corps. We had never compromised our standards. We are still viewed as being elite. And for many youngsters, it's a rite of passage.

Kids today, and ever since World War II, have grown up in a prophylactic world where they're packaged in cellophane and protected. You know you can't go swimming without having six or seven lifeguards. You can't do anything vigorous without having somebody standing over you to safeguard you against possible injury or accident. Some of the spice of life, some of the danger of life, is robbed in this protective society. So these kids see the Marine Corps, with its challenge and its excitement, as something that they want to do to prove their manhood. It becomes a rite of passage, a greening process, for a lot of these youngsters.

The quality that we're getting in now, most of them don't stay and we don't want them to stay. You know, they go on out and they go on to college, and they live in the bread of the American society. Many of them come back in as officers after college. And they remain in the Reserves, so we have a strong and vigorous Reserve. But they've gone through something that changes them forever, the same as it changed you forever after your enlisted experience. You are made to smell, feel, and act like a man, and it gives you tremendous self-confidence, which influences whatever you do for the rest of your life. The youngsters know this. We don't publicize coming in for a trade, or . . .

Frank: We don't.

Trainor: No, the other Services do, but that's the beauty of the Marine Corps. We attract a certain brand of character, both into our enlisted ranks and our officer ranks, by the very name Marine means high standards and challenge and adventure. And that draws them in. It drew me in, it drew you in, and it draws legions in today.

Frank: But the thing, you know, that's so terrible that we have to pay such heavy premiums to keep the people that we want to keep in. [Marine Corps Chief

Historian Henry I.] “Bud” Shaw’s son is a communications expert or some sort. He just reenlisted for six years, and I think he got something like \$16[,000] or \$18,000.

Trainor: Yes, well, I don’t know that’s a bad deal. When you consider what it costs to recruit, what it costs to put through, to transport, to clothe, to house, to basically train a guy, and then to put him into some sort of specialty training, that’s an enormous investment. It’s worth a fair premium for a quality guy to hang around because that means one less that you have to pay all that other money for anyway to bring through the network. So I think the bonus programs are a pretty cost-effective way of doing business.

Frank: I don’t know that it’s costing the Marine Corps as much as it is the other Services.

Trainor: I don’t know. And of course, I’ve been out of the recruit and the recruit training business for some time now. So I really am not up to date on all of these things. But I do know that our retention rate is good and certainly amongst our officers’ augmentation. There’s so many people wanting to get in that we have to turn down tremendously qualified young officers because there’s just no room in the house for them.

Frank: Oh, send [inaudible] augmentation is . . .

Trainor: Yes, but looking at it on the positive side, look at what a strong Marine Corps Reserve we have. When we reflect on how we needed the Marine Corps Reserve when the Korean War broke out, we have to always be attuned to the fact that that’s not a place for dullards and slackers. It’s a place for people who are professional even though they are not regulars, and who can be called up at a moment’s notice and go out and do the job and do it right.

That was another thing of my duty in the 1st District. I came to really know the Marine Corps Reserve and admire the Marine Corps Reserve. I saw mortar crews and artillery crews in the Reserves and pilots in the Reserves that would put the regulars to shame—really professional, really professional.

Frank: Was it during your time that they made the ADCs of the depots responsible for recruiting?

Trainor: Yes, that’s what I mentioned.

Frank: I didn’t realize it was as far back as ’76, but I guess it was.

Trainor: Oh, yes. And that was one of the reasons they established the ADC position was because of the increased responsibilities of the depot commander and the fact that he needed some assistance.

Frank: Now, you were down there for exactly two years.

Trainor: That’s right. And then I was reassigned to the Education Center at [MCB] Quantico. [Interruption in recording]

Frank: In March ’78, you went up to become director of the Ed Center at MCDEC (Marine Corps Education and Development Command).

Trainor: Yes.

Frank: That must have been an interesting assignment.



Trainor: Yes.  
Frank: And a challenging assignment.  
Trainor: Yes, I enjoyed that. I relieved [Major General Paul X.] P. X. Kelley who went on up to become head of requirements and programs at Headquarters Marine Corps. I stepped in while the academic year was just winding down, which was very useful for me because it gave me a lead time.  
Frank: P. X. had relieved [Wilbur F.] “Will” Simlik, I guess.  
Trainor: No, P. X. had relieved, I can’t recall his name right now, who retired from the Marine Corps from that job. He had been passed over for major general and went on out. But, of course, I was familiar with the Ed Center. I had gone through Command and Staff College myself and had taught for three years at Command and Staff College. So I was intimately familiar with Command and Staff and obviously very familiar with AWS [Amphibious Warfare School] and Comm [Communications] School and OCS [Officer Candidate School] and [The] Basic School and the Staff NCO Academy.  
Frank: The senior school didn’t come under you?  
Trainor: Yes, Command and Staff.  
Frank: Yes, Command and Staff.  
Trainor: Yes. That’s what I said.  
Frank: Okay.  
Trainor: I was intimately familiar with it because I had taught there for three years as well as having gone through the course.

I knew what I wanted to do. P. X.’s philosophy and mine were basically the same. We were not interested in turning out mechanics. We were interested in turning out people who thought, could reason through problems, and do common sense things. We didn’t want a checklist mentality. So all of the things that were ongoing on his watch, I was very comfortable with and simply picked up and tried to fine-tune.

There was subsequent criticism of the way Command and Staff College and AWS were being run. I have to make a distinction between the two because AWS was, in fact and should be in my judgment, more a training school, because you’ve got young fellows there that really don’t have that much experience, and they need the training. However, Command and Staff College is the highest level school that we have and, in my judgment, has to be a little bit more than a training school. That’s why the emphasis on the problem solving and thinking things through. Now, subsequent to my departure from there, there was criticism by people like [William S.] “Bill” Lind and [Edward N.] “Ed” Luttwak about the way we educated our people. There was criticism within the Marine Corps and from some of the retired community that we were turning out “staffies” instead of warriors and so forth.

I suppose, depending on your perspective, there was some legitimacy to some of those complaints. If you’re in the FMF, a guy coming from Command and Staff College, you wish he had had nothing but operational and planning and training matters, FMF sort of stuff. But

you have to remember about 50 percent of the people that we received were going to the FMF [and] 50 percent of the people were coming from the FMF. A very small percentage of them were in the infantry; a minor percentage of them, in fact, were in the combat arms. So we had to ensure that what we were doing was developing command and staff people; not just command people, not just infantry people. Now, subsequent to that, and I don't mean this in criticism of my successor, but there was a tendency to orient it more towards the FMF. And that's okay, as long as most of the people are going to the FMF. But if they're coming from the FMF, it doesn't make a hell of a lot of sense. So we tried to strike a balance between command and staff action, and I think we did it very effectively. We had very competent instructors. The students were challenged. We had a very fine program, which was developed by the staff during the two years that I was there, wherein the people would come in and they'd all get kind of an inventory test, which made heavy use of computers on it as a training aid. They would, in a sense, test themselves to see where their strengths and their weaknesses were, and then there were remedial courses there for them to bring themselves up to a level of standard in the areas that they were weak in. We started at a presumed level of instruction, which presumed that they knew everything that a student who had graduated from AWS knew. So in effect they gave themselves a self-imposed examination to see what sort of an AWS graduate they were, where they were weak. Then it was their responsibility, and we gave them the assistance, to bring themselves up to speed so we didn't have to go back and bore everybody, or a fair percentage of the class, with rudimentary stuff. We could move straight on from there. And that proved to be very effective.

Frank: What was the quality of the students coming in from the other services?

Trainor: Oh, very . . . the [U.S.] Navy, of course, was always poor.

Frank: It always has been.

Trainor: Yes. And this was a constant complaint. [Navy Admiral Thomas B.] "Tom" Hayward was CNO and I remember b——g to him, and the Commandant b——d to him, everybody b——g to him, about the poor quality. But then even the Navy's own schools, the Naval War College both at the command and staff level and at the senior level, they were the worst students because the Navy was oriented toward the mechanical side of running ships and so forth. But that, under Hayward, started to change and [Navy Admiral James D.] Watkins continued that. So I think there are better quality people coming into our schools now, as well as to the Naval War College. But they would send SEALs and they would send medical service people, or doctors, because they were going to be serving with the Marines. Well that wasn't the point. The whole thing is you had a Navy growing up that didn't know anything about amphibious operations, and yet that was one of the functions of the balanced fleet. So we wanted line officers and aviators.

Frank: They wouldn't send them.

Trainer: During the time I was there, I saw three classes where a slight improvement had been made. But I understand it's considerably better now. But generally speaking, Command and Staff moved along smoothly. AWS was in good shape. Basic School was in good shape. OCS was in good shape.

Where we were lacking, and with my experience particularly with recruiting and recruit training, were in our staff NCO and NCO education. We really had need for work on that, and that's where I focused my attention. That was the squeaky wheel as far as I was concerned. So I put together a pretty good team of guys to work on totally revamping the whole approach to NCO and staff NCO training. It was budgeted for. The thing has almost reached fruition now.

It was a move that I think was long overdue in the Marine Corps. We pin a set of stripes on a guy and call him an NCO and assumed that he knew how to be an NCO and in fact he didn't. So what we did, we worked at three levels: a core curriculum for NCO School, not only the NCO School at Quantico but we standardized the core curriculum throughout the Marine Corps.

Frank: Throughout the Corps, yes.

Trainer: Now, "These are thing that they have to teach and here is the lesson plan. Here's the way it is to be taught." But then we left enough flex so that the local command could adjust the rest of the NCO School to whatever his particular needs or deficiencies were.

Frank: When did IOC [Infantry Officer Course] come in?

Trainer: Okay, IOC was initiated . . .

Frank: Infantry Officers' School.

Trainer: Yes, Infantry Officers' School. That was initiated under General Kelley, but he was gone before the first one was established. So it came on my watch, but it was instituted by Kelley. What he did was shorten The Basic School a little bit to buy the hours necessary to establish the IOC. At that time, under the incumbent Democratic administration, they had a bunch of whiz kids (we used to run into it down at Parris Island too, and it used to drive me crazy) who were so concerned about the training line, the amount of time spent in training instead of productive work. It was kind of the Harvard Business School management approach which was totally ludicrous, because if you're not in a war and fighting what you should be doing in peacetime is training. So what difference does it make how long you were training? But they were insistent that we cut the training line down to as short a period as possible so that these people could get out and do their thing. You'd ask them the question, "Well, what is it that they're going to do?" "Well, they're going to be communicators." "Well what are they going to be doing when they're communicating?" "Well, they're going to be sending . . ." "They're training! They're training! What difference does it make? Unless we're fighting, we're training!" But you couldn't get it through to them. They were some of these idiot whiz kids that come out of all these fancy colleges and making a name for

themselves and then go dashing off. But literally, Kelley had to cut back on the length of Basic School, because of this mentality, to buy the hours to establish IOC.

But we really needed an IOC. When I went through Basic School, most people went into the infantry, and Basic School was infantry oriented. Well the Marine Corps has gotten a hell of a lot more complicated and sophisticated since then. And the same is true where the Command and Staff College couldn't be just providing field grade officers for infantry in the FMF, so Basic School had to be providing other aspects, like the supply side or logistics. So it had to be a balanced program. Then everybody would leave this balanced program (even though the emphasis was still fundamentally on infantry troop leading), but all those who were going to other specialties would then go off to special schools: to supply school, to finance school, to public affairs school, whatever flight training. But the poor infantrymen . . .

Frank: Were thrust right into it.

Trainor: It was assumed that he knew everything about infantry, which was nonsense.

Frank: IOC was established, and I assume that there was a long perceived . . . that a need had been long perceived by the division commanders.

Trainor: Oh, yes, no question.

Frank: And the regimental commanders.

Trainor: That was the feedback that we were getting—that P. X. was getting—was that these guys were fine young officers and they came along, but it took them six to nine months to come up on the step. With IOC, they went out and hell, the first thing we were getting back was that the platoon leaders knew more than the company commanders, and that doesn't surprise me at all. They really knew their stuff. They knew their weapons, they knew their tactics, and they were good. We built on the IOC.

My only complaint with it was on live-firing exercises. They were so artificial and there were so many safety precautions on the live-firing exercise with the IOC that it was, from my point of view, counterproductive, because what you were doing was turning out a generation of officers who literally feared accidental discharge and injury with live fire.

Instead of developing a sense of competence and confidence in conducting live fire training, they were so tied up with safety regulations that when they would go down to their operational units, they'd do the same sort of thing. So, you know, that was not the way to do it. It was a never-ending battle to overcome this fear of live-fire exercises and the over emphasis on safety. There are certain intrinsic risks in being a Marine, and realistic training I think becomes part and parcel of that package. But the IOC was doing very well. The whole picture down there at Quantico was, from the training and education side, superb.

I'd like to return to that NCO business for the moment because I think that was enormously important. We revamped the Staff NCO

Academy. We had the one here at Quantico, and we also had the one out on the West Coast. We found that we would have staff NCOs coming to the schools who were scared to death of it; they didn't want to come. Why? Because they were embarrassed. They felt that they were going to be called upon to do things that they felt that they were not competent to do, particularly in the area of leadership, because they had, as I mentioned before, been given the stripes but nobody ever told them how to be an NCO. So we had to overcome that. I think we effectively did that.

Then we developed various approaches to take staff NCO training out to the field, because we only had limited room in the two staff NCO academies. So we had put together mobile training teams, is what it amounted to, wherein the staff NCO students would do a certain amount of work by extension course, and then the contact team would go out and work with them on scene, at the division or the base or wherever it might have been. We developed export packages to be used for both NCO School and staff NCO training for troops that were deploying into the Med [Mediterranean] or WestPac [Western Pacific]. The classic extension school at Quantico was eliminated, and we integrated the Marine Corps Institute, at [Marine Barracks Washington, DC,] 8th and I, which came under the purview of the Education Center.

Frank: Oh, really?

Trainor: It was all consolidated at that time. The standard Basic School, AWS course, and Command and Staff College course on the correspondence program—that was done away with—and we had a building block program, which we established where a fellow who wanted to become an expert in artillery matters didn't have to take the whole AWS course or the entire Command and Staff College course. He could take the graduate levels, the various building blocks: Artillery 101 and then he could take Artillery 201 if he had already done 101. So the guy could do it on a functional basis as well as on a horizontal basis. It took a lot of work, but I think we have gotten there. As far as I know, we have gotten there. I think we improved the whole correspondence/extension course approach of the Marine Corps and, most importantly, the NCO program. Then we established the senior NCO program for first sergeants and sergeant majors, which was kind of on a seminar basis, a senior seminar basis. So I take great pride in the efforts that we undertook during that period to improve our staff NCO and NCO education.

Now, another thing that I take a great deal of pride in is the work that Al Gray, who had the Development Center, and [Lieutenant General] John [H.] Miller, who was CG, MCDEC [Marine Corps Development and Education Command], and myself did in improving doctrine or operational procedures. We were moving into a fast and complex world. We had the FMFMs [FMF manuals], but they had become sterile and most of them were out of date and needed updating. We had all sorts of new equipment, all sorts of new ideas being introduced as to the way we should fight, and we didn't have a mechanism for developing our tactics,

techniques, and doctrine. So what we did was consolidate the effort between the Development Center and the Ed Center, and we started to put out ICPs, which were instructional publications with absolutely no doctrinal authority by the Education Center. These went out in white pamphlets. The first one that went out was on mobile mech [mechanized] operations. It went out to the field, and it was one of these things: “Try these techniques and give us your views on them.” We put out three iterations of those ICPs. We had great feedback from the field. Both the 2d [Marine] Division and the 1st Division were playing with a lot of this mobile mech stuff, particularly the 2d Division, because they had been operating up in northern Europe.

Then when we had run through three iterations, we formalized the thing a little bit more by putting out a new type of document, which was called the *Operational Handbook*. The *Operational Handbook* then went under a green camouflage cover and it was signed off by John Miller. This went out to the field, and it was kind of tentative doctrine or tentative procedure and technique, and again we asked for feedback. As feedback would come in, we would update this thing. And that went through about three iterations. By this time, everybody in the FMF had been exposed to the Marine Corps thinking on conducting mobile mech operations. We did the same thing with the integration between using Cobra gunships and the antitank helicopters, along with the mobile mech. We started a new iteration on that.

So these things started to be cranked out at Quantico and got them out to the field, and the field loved them. We were getting great response. Then we put out two publications, one called *Operational Overview*. That was taking lessons learned from the Vietnamese War and from exercises and putting them out to the field, so that they would rediscover the wheel. Then a companion piece on the threat, bringing people up to date on what the latest information was on the Soviets [member countries of the former Soviet Union]. These were designed for the company and the battalion level, from squad leader right on up to battalion commander. It was kind of a useful instrument.

The one thing that we wanted to do, was to conduct all these exercises—CAXs [combined-arms exercises]—that were going on out at Twentynine Palms, all the amphibious exercises and increasing number of joint exercises, and we wanted to capture all of this stuff in computers and keep it in a computer bank and put out regular, formal publications on the lessons learned. There was a program to do that, but it became a victim of the [President James E. “Jimmy”] Carter budget and we couldn’t afford to do it. It’s a shame. I don’t know if they’ve done anything on it since the horn of plenty spilled out under [President Ronald W.] Reagan. But clearly, Marines are constantly relearning old lessons. With the age of computers and the way we can document our exercises in lessons learned and after-action reports, and distill this sort of stuff and crank it back out

to the field so that people can make adequate use of it. It's criminal if we, in fact, are not doing it or don't do it.

So, we were moving along very smartly there. John Miller then went up to Headquarters Marine Corps, and I moved in, on an interim basis, as the CG, MCDEC until [Lieutenant General Richard E.] "Dick" Carey came up from the 2d [Marine Aircraft] Wing to take over. This was also the time that became my infamous parachute jump. I went on a jump with some of the recon guys from the Development Center who were testing some new equipment. They were going to be . . . it was a high altitude opening, and one of them was making something like his 1,000th jump. He was going to get some sort of an award when he landed. The whole thing was all put together. There were going to be two wind dummies, a gunnery sergeant, and myself and we would go out at about 1,200 feet, and then from 10,000 feet up, the two principal jumpers. We were to land right in front of the CG's headquarters, on the drill field in front of CG, MCDEC building—Lejeune Hall.

So up we went, and I hadn't jumped in a while, but I did some practice PLFs (practice landings and falls) and so forth and chuted up, and we went up. It was strange, sort of a strange thing that happened. We came over the DZ (drop zone), and the jumpmaster gave the signal to go. The guy that was assistant jumpmaster tapped the gunnery sergeant who was the first to go out, and he left. Then I started to move behind him and he grabbed me. I don't know why in the hell he grabbed me. The jumpmaster, to this day, doesn't know why he grabbed me. [Major Wesley L.] "Wes" Fox, by the way, was the jumpmaster. Of course the chopper that we were jumping from—a [CH-]46—was still moving. So then he finally released me, and I went. But, Jesus, when I went out, I was back over near the railroad track! So I had a steerable chute and aimed it towards the drill field. As I was coming over, I could see that I wasn't going to make the drill field, and I was probably going to end up landing in the road, you know, where the saluting batteries are, at that intersection at the circle. It looked like I was going to land there, and all I could see myself was landing on top of some station wagon coming back from the commissary with a wife, full of groceries, and a car full of kids. So I slipped, then, back in the other direction, and, Jesus, I was going at a hell of a rate, a hell of a lateral rate, and I knew I was in bad trouble because I was coming in against the trees that bordered the road. And I hit one of the trees. It just threw me all a [out of] kilter, and I landed off balance with my left foot down and broke my ankle in six places. So there was a lot of laughing about that. [Laughter]

Frank: It wasn't very funny at the time.

Trainor: Well, in a sense I thought it was. Well, that's what you get. But the guy that didn't laugh was [Commandant Robert H.] "Bob" Barrow. He was so g——d d——n mad at me you just can't believe it. He absolutely excoriated me!

Frank: Really?

Trainor: Oh, really. He was really hacked. So at any rate, I ended up being operated on and ended up in a cast. We had the change of command with John Miller and then the subsequent one a month or six weeks later, whatever it was, with Dick Carey and me on crutches with a cast on my leg.

The ending of the story at Quantico is not as pleasant as I would like. Carey and I did not get along.

Frank: Oh, really?

Trainor: We did not get along at all. Dick Carey was an FMF operator and an air wing commander. He had no knowledge, no idea as to how MCDEC ran and certainly no idea how the Education Center ran. He was one of these guys that had to show his authority by butting in and giving direction on something he knew nothing about. I took umbrage at this, and we had a series of disagreements. But I could understand that, you know. That's the way things go sometimes.

But the one thing that I will not forgive him for and that is that he effectively arrested all of the good work that the MCDEC—John Miller, Al Gray, and I—were doing on tactics, techniques, procedures, and doctrine experimental improvements. He forbade any more of the ICPs going out from the Ed Center—no more *Operational Handbooks*. His philosophy, if you can believe this given what I've already mentioned about this was "Try it. If you like it, work on it and give us a recommendation." It was an iteration process, an evolutionary process to bring us into the world of modern fighting. Carey says, "There will be nothing that is issued by Quantico in the way of tactics, techniques, procedures, or doctrine that has not been approved by Headquarters Marine Corps. Nothing will go out except over my name, and I won't sign anything unless the Commandant has approved it."

We tried to point out to him that was absolutely the opposite of what we were trying to do, and that one of the problems with the FMFMs was that with the busy people over at Headquarters Marine Corps fighting the day-to-day actions, this was the kind of stuff that they put in the hold basket to get to it if they ever did get to it; and that the Education Center and the Development Center, these were the places that were supposed to do these things. As a matter of fact, we had the Marine Corps order changed in order to reflect exactly that. But he would hear of none of it, and we had a distinct disagreement on that.

Then came my rather sudden transfer. I was sitting as president of the colonel's board, and it was a Wednesday. The board was technically due out on Friday. I got a call from General Barrow's office and he asked me when the board was going to finish. I said, "We'll finish on schedule, on Friday." He said to me, "Fine, because next week I want you to come up here and take over as director of plans." Well, that just about knocked me out of the chair. I said to him, "Ah, that's kind of sudden. I'm not so sure I can get things turned over in time to do that." He said, "Don't worry about that. We'll get a Reserve officer to fill in in the interim until such time as a regular general comes to take it over." I said, "The thing that



really disturbs me is that I was really hoping to get back to the FMF. Since I've been a general officer I haven't been back to the FMF. Frankly, I think I rate the 2d Division." I'll never forget him, that patrician Louisianan just looked at this kid from the Bronx with those steely eyes of his, and he said, "It's my job to make the tough decisions, and it's your job to carry them out." That was the end of the discussion. With an "Aye, aye, sir," I got up and marched out and then packed up in short order and came on up to Headquarters Marine Corps.

Now, I don't know for a fact, but I think that the disagreements between Carey and me may have been the basis of it. For all I know, Carey called up the Commandant and said, "Get this son of a b——h Trainor out of my hair." If he did that, that's fine. I carried out my orders, and it doesn't change my opinion of him one way or another. Even if he didn't do that, it still doesn't change my opinion.

My opinion was that he set back the Marine Corps in its development. He set us back by at least three years. They're just now getting back up on the step. He set us back three years, and I think in large measure could be considered the culprit who left us open to the sort of criticism that we have received that the Marine Corps is a kind of a checklist, recipe-mentality organization; the sort of things that Bill Lind charges Quantico with. I think a lot of that can be laid at the doorstep of Dick Carey, who set the whole thing back into a kind of a "boys town" training school rather than a dynamic, operationally attuned process. If you guess that I don't have too much respect for Dick Carey, you're absolutely right.

Frank: Had you been selected for your second star?

Trainor: Oh, yes, yes. I was a two star.

Frank: Oh, you were two star then.

Trainor: Oh, yes. I came up and took over Quantico and had been selected in my second year as a BG.

Frank: In your second year as a BG?

Trainor: Second year as a BG, yes. So I made major general in two years.

Frank: That was pretty good.

Trainor: Yes. So I served at Quantico as a major general.

Frank: He was kind of a bright-haired guy based on Eagle Pull and . . .

Trainor: Well, there's no question he was technically competent. He was a hell of a fine aviator. But unfortunately it (the system) took a very fine aviator and put him in an area that he knew nothing about and was incapable of learning. He had a fantastic ego, and it was all pomp and circumstance with him—trivia, putting up the fancy gate down there at Quantico. At a time when we couldn't afford the money for training materials he wasted a lot of money putting up that "victory arch" to him. No, I'm very critical of the guy in relationship to what he did at Quantico, not in relationship to his splendid reputation as a Marine aviator and as a warrior. But maybe they should have kept him as a warrior.

Frank: Well, coming up here to plans must have been interesting.

Trainor: Yes. Again, I had a good handle on that, as was the case when I took the Ed Center after my previous experience as an instructor in the Ed Center. When I came up to plans, I felt very comfortable because I had served in the trenches, in JPG [?], as a lieutenant colonel as an action officer and as a colonel planner. So I was coming back to familiar turf then, when I came back up to Washington.

End SESSION VII

## U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lieutenant General Bernard E. "Mick" Trainor, USMC (Ret)  
Interviewer: Mr. Benis M. Frank  
Place: Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, DC  
Date: 1 May 1986

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### SESSION VIII

Frank: We're getting to the last session, Mick, and that's when you were assigned as director of plans and then you became PP&O [Plans, Policies, and Operations]. More or less, you'd been on the outer fringes of plans so it wasn't anything really new that you were stepping into. What were some of the problems that faced you, some of the projects that faced you when you reported up there?

Trainor: Well, there were no problems; things were running smoothly when I moved back into the Plans, Policies, and Operations arena. There were no big issues that were facing the Marine Corps. Our bona fides within the joint system were quite high. The Marines were viewed as an honest broker. We had, rarely had anything that was of parochial interest, and everybody was aware of things that did have parochial interest for the Marine Corps and generally speaking, tried to shy away from it. So that allowed the Marines to analyze the issues in an objective fashion and give its judgment for the best interest of the nation. As I think I've mentioned to you personally, the Joint Staff seemed to appreciate that because frequently they were subject to tugs and pulls of various parochial interests within the Joint Staff, and to have a service operating as an honest broker in the deliberations was very useful. There was some concern, years ago when the Marines became an equal member within the JCS during General [Louis H.] Wilson's tenure, that we really didn't rate that sort of thing because we were part of the naval service and this gave the naval service two votes against a single vote to the other two Services. But, in fact, that was not the case.

The honesty and integrity and the smarts that I think the Marine Corps displayed in dealing with joint issues made our appointment as equal member far out of proportion to our size. So it was very useful and, of course, it added to the prestige of the Marine Corps.

At Headquarters one of my concerns, which dated back to the days when I was an action officer and a planner, was that we were always putting out fires. We were reacting to things that were coming along. There was very little time to think and to give the Commandant advice for things coming down the road.

I remember I was concerned about this when I was a colonel back after the '73 war and after we saw the lethality of modern weapons and the tremendous carnage that took place in a very short period of time. I

remember going to [Lieutenant] General [Herbert L.] Beckington and questioning whether or not we really could conduct an amphibious operation in today's environment. From the results of our conversation emerged a study group, a permanent study group, made up of very talented people. It still exists—the Amphibious Study Group—which was located at [MCB] Quantico, which would do long-range thinking and research. It was supposed to come under the deputy chief of staff for PP&O. Over time that changed and it became an instrument of the chief of staff. But it did yeoman's service along these lines and continues to do so today as it looks into amphibious operations in the future. I had a concern that at Headquarters Marine Corps, on a less parochial basis, we didn't have any group that could look down the line and give the Commandant some recommendations for initiatives that he could introduce within the Joint [Chiefs of] Staff, which would be very useful. I noticed the [U.S.] Navy could do this, and to a degree the other services, but mostly the Navy. The CNO was always putting out chief of naval operations memorandum [CNOM], which would go to the JCS and then the JCS would have to address them. The Navy used to pump these things out, and I felt that we should be able to do that sort of thing also.

So I took out of hide, two very fine officers—[Matthew P.] “Matt” Caulfield, who was a colonel at the time [and] now a brigadier general, and [Thomas L.] “Tom” Wilkerson, who was a major at the time and now a colonel (Lloyd Wilkerson's son and a very talented Marine officer and aviator that I'm sure is destined for stars)—and put the two of them together and established what I called the Strategic Initiatives Branch [SIB]. Their charter was very, very broad. I really anticipated that the personalities themselves would develop the sort of thing that they would do. Their broad mission was to be disassociated with the day-to-day tank activities and try to look down the line so we could give advice and counsel to the Commandant for various initiatives. The basic concept was that this would be a permanent thing, and in fact it did become a permanent thing. It's a standard branch within plans right now.

I wanted people who had been in the trenches as action officers and planners but were disassociated from that, rather than just smart guys who didn't know what it was like to be in the trenches and in the gutter fighting that took place. Otherwise, you kind of get the ivory tower approach as opposed to the practical approach. It worked out very well and it's still working out quite well; [it was] something that the Commandant needed.

So that, I think, was the major initiative that has paid off, but really, within the Marine Corps we faced no major problem. Things were going along quite well for the Corps. We were getting the resources, which allowed us to establish the maritime prepositioning ships, to solve the block obsolescence problem of amphibious shipping. Of course, we had rubs here and there with the Navy over the dedication of resources, but for all practical purposes we were in fat city. We were developing the

LAV [light armored vehicle]. God, how many times I've ridden in those things, I can't even remember the name of them now—the LAV and the concept. There was concern that we needed a concept for the LAV: how are we going to employ this sort of thing. I always felt that that was an unnecessary concern. Marines play things from the bottom up. You give something to the troops and let them play with it, and they'll eventually tell you how it should be employed. Now I always felt that this was one of the great strengths of the Marine Corps, and it was the philosophy behind the ICPs and the operational handbooks that we addressed in the last session.

Unlike the [U.S.] Army, where they put a bunch of bright, young fellows, or bright, old fellows, in some sort of an ivory tower and have them come up with a concept like active defense of FOFA [follow-on forces attack] or whatever, and then foist them upon the Army. Everybody wonders, "What is this thing?" And it means different things to different people. Then the Army finds themselves backtracking and changing, and everybody's going nuts trying to figure out what it is they're supposed to do.

The Marine Corps I think goes about it in just exactly the opposite way, wherein you get an idea and the idea can originate at Headquarters, at Quantico, out in the FMF, doesn't make any difference, an article in *The Gazette*, and then we start to play with the idea. Only after we've played with it and worked with it, be it a piece of equipment or a concept, and everybody is comfortable with it, is the thing accepted and it finds its way into our manuals and indeed if it's important enough, into our doctrine.

That's the way I looked at the LAV. Get it out to the troops, have kind of a baseline concept for its use, which we had out at Twentynine Palms during the formation of the first company. But in large measure, over time, the troops will tell us how to operate that thing. We're still in that evolutionary process.

Things like that were coming along. The [McDonnell Douglas AV-8B] Harrier program was coming along very well. The RPV [remotely piloted vehicle] program, we got in on the ground floor. We needed an RPV; we have needed one for a long time. There is a community—and not just within the Marine Corps but in general—a community that was anti-RPV. The Aquila [RPV] program was dragging along for years. Everybody was hanging bells and whistles on the thing and it was becoming more and more expensive and less useful. The Lebanon situation provided us an opportunity to solve that. We needed an RPV for reconnaissance and also for spotting purposes, and we used the Lebanese excuse to go full bore with the Navy and got the Navy on board to buy an off-the-shelf item and that system we bought was [Tadiran] Mastiff, which the Israelis had. We tested it; we trained people in Israel; we tested the thing; we modified it; we tried it off carriers; and while it's not a T/E [table of equipment] piece of equipment and we don't have a T/O [table of organization] organization per se for it, the fact remains that if we go to

war, the Marines are the only ones that have an operational RPV capability.

Frank: RPV is . . .

Trainor: That's a remotely piloted vehicle. The model airplane that flies high and . . .

Frank: Decoy you mean?

Trainor: Well, it's not a decoy. It has a television camera on it and so forth. Our approach to the thing was "Get the basic vehicle [and] keep that simple and cheap, and then we can always put modules with the various sophisticated items on it to meet whatever it is that the mission calls for," as opposed to what seemed to be the approach within the RPV community, which was dominated by the Army and the [U.S.] Air Force—to have an item that was all things to all men. Well, when you do something like that it becomes too cumbersome, too expensive, and too technical. So they're still screwing around trying to get an RPV and the Marine Corps already has one. That was, I think a great achievement.

We were getting a lot of things in the barn that would be useful; test things, prototype things. The philosophy that existed, which I certainly endorsed and which is, I think typical of the Marine Corps over the ages is, "Do we want something to try out? Yes." Grab every prototype you can. Whether it works out or not, grab it because then you have it. And if you go to war, you're probably going to find a use for the darned thing. We would snap up various prototypes of different types of equipment to test and to employ, then, if we went to war.

During my period back in the PP&O business, of course, the Central American issue arose, The Nicaraguan problem. The Marine Corps was generally lukewarm toward major involvement. The first issue, of course, was El Salvador. The intelligence information indicated that El Salvador was going down the tubes, and the question was, "Should the United States put its prestige on the line to try to buck up a corrupt, ineffective regime?" which was almost medieval in its approach towards government. "Should we do this with the likelihood the damn thing fails?" So we argued, not very strenuously, but we argued; and I think the JCS, in general, were very chary about it and signaled to the administration that this was not the place for the president to put his prestige on the line, because he was liable to lose it.

The White House, on the other hand, saw it as an imperative as represented, of course, by the remarks of Jeane [D.] Kirkpatrick and others, and the administration went full bore to save the El Salvador situation. You've got to give the administration credit; they succeeded. They succeeded, and they got the reforms underway; they got the military turned around; they got the elections, representative of the people; and now we see the insurgency there dying of lack of nourishment. To me, it's absolutely amazing that two or three years ago the focus of attention was exclusively on El Salvador and all the Cassandras were predicting doom and defeat and chastising the president. By golly, he pulled it off, and you don't see that much about El Salvador today. The focus of attention

shifted to Nicaragua and the Contra operation there. That ties back to the El Salvador story.

A great deal of the support for, logistic support, for the insurgents was coming from Nicaragua. It was coming over land down by the Gulf of Fonseca. It was coming by water out of Nicaragua. It was coming via Honduras and via Belize, coming on overland shipments. We had a minor handle on the situation, but it was of concern.

The two things that occurred to turn things around, [Army General] Paul [F.] Gorman was made SouthCom [U.S. Southern Command] and relieved a very fine Army general that was well intentioned but not very apt. They sent down to SouthCom one of the finest Machiavellian practitioners of the occult art of bureaucracy that I have ever known—a brilliant man, a manipulative man, Paul Gorman. He became SouthCom, and he immediately used all his bureaucratic tricks and his power levers to really make SouthCom a basic intelligence front for the counterinsurgency operations in El Salvador. He was able, like the Marine Corps, to steal every experimental piece of equipment to be put in use down there. He [Gorman] had a lot of contacts with the CIA, so he got a lot of their assistance and little by little the intelligence picture, which was so lacking in El Salvador, started to emerge. He established a joint intelligence fusion center right here in Washington, with all sorts of source intelligence coming in, and this would be transmitted down to him and down to El Salvador, and the Salvadorans started to turn things around.

One thing that we had noted with the Salvadoran troops was that they were very brave, brave to the point of being foolish. There was clearly a macho image that they tried to live up to, and they did live up to it. So there wasn't a problem of getting these guys to fight; the question was where you were going to get them to fight. Instead of stomping around the bushes now, the intelligence started to develop, and they were able to get after the logistics infrastructure, which was the Achilles' heel of Salvadoran guerrillas.

Now, the second thing that occurred was the CIA involvement in establishing the Contras. We knew where the guerrillas were; we knew where their infrastructure was; we knew where the stuff was coming from, and now we had to put the pressure on the Nicaraguans to give them something to worry about in their own backyard so that they wouldn't be providing that logistic support. So we would cut off the snake both at the head and at the tail. The CIA developed the Contra approach, which initially was simply to interdict the lines of communication into El Salvador and also to put enough pressure on the Nicaraguan government that it would be looking after its own interests as opposed to exporting the "revolution without boundaries" as the Communists were prone to call it. Well, like so many things, CIA just let the thing get out of control, and the next thing we know the harbors were being mined and there was an Op-34 [classified covert actions in Vietnam]—the sense of déjà vu that I had having been involved in a similar type CIA operation in the early days of

the Vietnamese War. All this came back to me and I thought, “I hope they have more success than we had in Vietnam.” Well, unfortunately they’re having too damn much success, and of course the world public opinion and domestic opinion turned against the operation, particularly with the mining and so forth, which was very effective. Then the Contras continued to grow and it really got beyond the CIA’s capability of handling it. Throughout all of this the JCS was very leery of this whole program. There was the sense amongst us, as the OpsDepts [operations deputies] and reflected also in JCS discussions, that this thing is too small to really overthrow the government and too large, really, to turn off.

Frank: Well, it’s very interesting; this Contra business is very interesting. Despite public opinion, which from what I read is opposed to U.S. intervention in Nicaragua and public opinion which is opposed to the use of Contras, public perception is that the Contras are nothing but . . . but the “Somozacitas” [or Somocistas] who were kicked out before and what you’re going to do is trade one type of government for another, neither of which the United States should support. Despite this all, the administration and the president is going full bore forward with it. It’s almost like the Polish question, the elephant and the Polish question. Everything else . . . and the Contras and Nicaragua . . .

Trainer: Yes, yes.

Frank: There’s almost a . . . what’s the term I’m trying to think of . . . an obsession. The administration and the president seem obsessed with this Nicaraguan thing.

Trainer: Well, let me tell you. Casey, [CIA Director, William J.] “Bill” Casey, DCI [director, Central Intelligence], has a map that he keeps. It shows all the Soviet-dominated areas in red. He’s always fond of pointing out to President Reagan that, since Reagan has been president, no other red spots have appeared on the map. This apparently appeals to Reagan’s approach. He is not about to have a nation go red in our own backyard. But the Contra problem is such that they don’t seem to be able to develop the capability to overthrow the government. It’s been estimated that 15 percent of the Nicaraguan population are pro-Contra, 15 percent are for the Ortega government, and the rest of the public are just sitting on the fence waiting to see what happens.

One of the things, from a military point of view, that we saw deficient within the Contras was their ability to build up an urban infrastructure. If you’re going to overthrow the Sandinistas you’ve got to do it in Managua, [Nicaragua,] but they were incapable, because of the tight controls that the Marxists habitually employ, to establish any sort of urban insurgency. So screwing around out in the countryside, even though it made sense when Mao [Zedong] was talking about rural insurgencies—that you surround the cities and so forth—the antidote techniques for that have long been established. So as a result, the Contras, the best they can do is what they were originally intended to do. So it’s still worth the investment and that is give the Nicaraguans enough to worry about that



they're not screwing around with the Salvadorans. In the meantime El Salvador is getting stronger; Honduras is getting stronger; Guatemala is getting stronger. So it's worth the effort, but whether it overthrows the Sandinistas is another thing. That was one of the evolving elements of the whole thing.

I have pointed out the origins of this very effort but now it's taken on a mission—although it hasn't been so stated by the administration—of overthrowing the government. It probably just is not going to happen.

But your perception of the public response is quite accurate, and American people do not seem to be worried about it. It's kind of a vague threat down there. There's this enormous concern about us getting involved in another Vietnam, which the Sandinistas exploit very cleverly by talking about, "Yes, you can come in and conquer us, but we will take to the hills, and you will still find your tombstone here in the hills of Nicaragua the same as you did in Vietnam." This plays on public fears and concerns of the Vietnam age. It certainly has affected the chiefs themselves, and it certainly has affected Secretary [of Defense Caspar W.] Weinberger.

Weinberger, in his very famous speech, talked about the six factors that should exist before you can employ U.S. forces, which includes full public support, clear objectives, definable time, and all of those things. If you apply all of those things literally, Christ, you'd never go to war; you'd never employ military forces. So that's somewhat simplistic, and I'm sure the secretary doesn't mean it to be taken literally. But the message is there that the Department of Defense, which people historically thought were hawkish, are, in fact, very dovish and very reluctant to use military force to solve what are essentially political problems. If you are going to use military force, well, you'd better be a little more precise as to what you want us to do rather than the vague sort of things that you had in Vietnam, "To support the independence of the South Vietnamese government and turn back the Communist invasion." Give us something a little more specific than that.

Frank: Of course, there's also the feeling that we missed the boat early on with Ho Chi Minh . . .

Trainor: Yes.

Frank . . . by supporting the French government. We missed the boat with [Jose Daniel] Ortega . . .

Trainor: I don't think that that's true.

Frank: You don't think so?

Trainor: No, I don't think so. Ortega and the council that run [the country], with the exception of [Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel] D'Escoto perhaps . . . you have real revolutionaries here who are dyed-in-the-wool Marxists. They are—like so many committed revolutionaries—they are marvelous when they're out of power, but they're totally useless and inefficient when they get in power. They almost have a death wish. I've seen the CIA profiles of that gang, and it's extraordinary. These fellows have a martyr

complex and nothing probably, would please them more than to be overthrown and find themselves back in the woods being hunted and being the great martyr for the cause. The mundane problems of trying to run an emerging country are almost intractable for them and certainly not in line with their interests.

If you recall, we tried very hard early on to cooperate with them. First of all we cut off aid to [Nicaraguan President Anastasio] Somoza [DeBayle]. The British were . . . well no, it was the British but I'll pass on that one. We did cut off aid to Somoza. We did try to cooperate with the Sandinistas when they came in and, in large measure, we were rebuffed by them because they were hardcore Marxists, and they did believe in the "revolution without borders." They wanted to consolidate Nicaragua; they clearly were trying to spread to El Salvador. I think their next target probably would have been Guatemala, and then you would have found Honduras somewhat surrounded and then Honduras, I think was the last of the dominoes—if I can use that term—the last of the dominoes to fall.

We have stopped that; there's no question of it. Reagan's judgment and his decisions, while perhaps a little clumsy, have worked in Central America so far. Where they go from here is hard to say, but, again, you can't make straight-line projections. When you say we're on the horns of a dilemma, we can't abandon the Contras at this point but they can't succeed on the other hand. Yes, that's at this point in time. But the world is a dynamic thing, and six months from now we're liable to see something entirely different, as two years ago people were saying there was absolutely no chance for El Salvador, but today El Salvador seems to be thriving.

The Central American thing was an issue of great interest and concern to the chiefs. There was a sensing that there was a lack of overall policy with regard to Central and Latin America. The JCS undertook, through the Joint Staff, a major study on a program for Latin America, which was very useful and, in many instances, paralleled a lot of the stuff that the special Kissinger Commission came up with; that you just couldn't look to some sort of military solutions down there. There had to be the social reforms, and a good deal of it was based on economics, and you had to key on such nations as Brazil and Argentina to become the bulwarks within the region. It was a very, very fine study, and it was forwarded on up to the secretary of defense [SecDef]. I don't know if it went any further than SecDef's office officially, although copies of it, obviously, went to [the] CIA and went to—bootleg copies—to the State Department.

I point that out because the Joint Staff was capable of turning out absolutely superior work. It's been a much-maligned group, particularly by those who want reorganization within the JCS. My experience, both on my first tour back in the early '70s in this business and in the most current one, was that the quality of the work on the Joint Staff, if it was on a significant subject, they would put the resources to it and it would be first

class. They did another one on what our attitude should be towards the People's Republic of China that was absolutely first class. They got good experts in the region to work on this thing. So the quality of Joint Staff work was of a high order if the issue was significant enough. In another area, admittedly, it was spotty but then the same sort of thing happens on every staff.

Frank: Are Marine Corps assignments to the Joint Staff looked at very closely and handpicked?

Trainor: I can't speak for [Marine Corps] Manpower as to how they went about that. Generally speaking, I think we put some very fine people over there. The logic behind it was the fact that we could not match the other services. There's a one-third, one-third, one-third split. But the one-third split to the Navy means the naval service of which we provide 20 percent of the input. So what the Marine Corps tried to do and has done very successfully . . .

Frank: Twenty percent?

Trainor: Yes. Twenty percent of the Navy's portion, of the Navy's one-third. What we tried to do was look for the key jobs where few people that we would provide would be in positions of great significance and also to keep us informed and also influence the action. I think by far and large we have done that. Contrast that with the Air Force which had enormous numbers of officers to assign to jobs like that and they would usually overstaff, because they had a lot of guys who were lieutenant colonels—and particularly colonels—who were very talented fellows, but they didn't have any place to put them, no place in the cockpit any longer, no place in the command because of the pyramid. Their rank structure is very top-heavy. So they were available to just absolutely saturate the Joint Staff and the various agencies and the interagency groups with their people and, therefore, to advance their own interests. Which brings me to the subject of the Air Force's overriding interest, and that is the single management issued of everything that flies.

The Air Force has not changed over the years. It feels . . . it looks at things in terms of air, sea, and land. If it's on the sea, the Navy should handle it. If it's on the land, the Army should handle it. And if it's in the air, the Air Force should handle it. And the way it should handle it is under some sort of a centralized arrangement where you put your limited assets where they are most needed at any point in time.

If you look at [it] from an Air Force point of view, this makes eminent good sense. If you look at it from a management standpoint, this makes eminent good sense. But in fact, the world doesn't work in such simplistic terms.

You needed balanced forces and each of the Services develops their way to fight in accordance with the mission that's been laid out to them. In the Marine Corps case, we have established this expeditionary approach where you're self-contained with everything you need to go anywhere in the world. You don't need somebody's infrastructure or permission to operate. You can operate in a self-contained fashion, which

means that you are a combination of air, land, and sea. Therefore our aviation is integral to the way we do our business under the MAGTF [Marine air-ground task force] concept, which I won't go over in this particular session. It's so well known to Marine audiences.

This runs absolutely counter to the Air Force approach, although there is a great similarity between the Air Force and the Marine approaches. The Air Force believes in centralized control but decentralized management of the assets. Well, the Marine Corps does too. All of the air is under control of the MAGTF commander but it's decentralized in its execution. So the arguments of the Air Force and the Marine Corps are similar. We do see things the same way. But the issue is

...

Frank: Who?

Trainer: ... at the level, the level of the thing. They would see it at the theater commander; we see it more on the operational level.

There's never been an argument in terms of air defense; we have subscribed to the fact that the Air Force can centrally manage air defense and we will participate in this sort of thing. In terms of air space management, which is a safety matter, centralized control under the Air Force is fine, or we will do the job also if we're tasked to do it. Where the rub comes in is in the apportionment allocation of the tasking for tactical missions. First of all, the Air Force approach is very cumbersome, very time consuming, so that you have to put the ... anybody who wants air has to put his requirements in 48 hours ahead of time. Well, as a ground commander this is totally unrealistic. Therefore, a lot of phony requests go in and the whole system tends to break down. It was tested in Vietnam when the Air Force won the single-management battle out there. The system broke down, and in my second tour in Vietnam, we were back to doing things the way they existed before the single-management decision went in favor of the Air Force, because the Air Force simply could not manage the thing to the satisfaction of the ground forces.

Recognize that the Air Force really doesn't think that much in terms of close air support and support in terms of ground units. They think in terms of strategic operations, but more importantly in terms of interdiction. They want to go after the rear areas. They don't want to fight forward of the FEBA [forward edge of battle area]. They want to go deep. "If we hurt them back there, then you guys won't have to worry about them up front." Well, that's nice in theory, but in practice it hasn't worked. Not to say that we don't need some of that. We do need deep interdiction; we practice it ourselves. The fact remains, you need aviation in support of the ground forces in direct support.

Now, I will say this, we have this love affair with close air support, but with the sophistication of anti-aircraft weapons—things like the [9K32] Strela [surface-to-air missile] and the more sophisticated versions of the ZSU-23-4 [Shilka anti-aircraft weapon] and the various anti-aircraft missiles that exist—and the enormous expense of airplanes, you say to yourself,

“Do you really want to use one of those expensive airplanes to do close air support? Are there not other ways of doing it?”

The Marine Corps has to really think that one through. We should not have such a love affair with close air support that we don't look at other ways of doing it. This is why I was big on the RPV program. RPVs can do things for you. Missiles can do things for you. Smart weapons can do things in a standoff mode, except they're so damn expensive. Do you really want to fire one of these multimillion dollar missiles to knock out one tank? This needs to be thought through. There is a mindset, in my judgment, within the Marine Corps that is so enamored with the old concept of the [Vought] Corsair [F4U] or the AD coming in close to the front lines that they still want the A-4s and the Harriers to do the same thing.

I'm not so sure that that's the way we want to go in the future. There's a time when it should be done, but we shouldn't take it as a matter of faith that it's the only way that you should do it. We've got smarter, more accurate artillery rounds; we can make use of the helicopters in pop-up fashion. We should rethink this close air support thing. A lot of it is being done; I think a lot more should be done. But it's tough to get A-4 pilots to think of doing things other than in the traditional fashion. If a few of them got shot down, it might get our attention.

But getting back to the air control matter, it really became a battle of theology; the theology of the Air Force versus the theology of the Marine Corps. In a practical sense there was not any difficulty in the field, whether you're exercising in Korea or whether it was the CentCom [U.S. Central Command] exercising, the operators in the field—both Marine and Air Force operators—they solved the problems on the ground. But it was getting the thing cranked into operation plans as to who was going to be in charge. The Air Force wanted an air component commander, and he would have control of all assets, and the Marine Corps was opposed to that. So we went round and round and round. The point that I tried to make to my opposite number in the Air Force was, “Look, we have a theological dispute here that we're not going to resolve. The Catholics aren't going to convert the Protestants, and the Protestants aren't going to convert the Catholics. That doesn't make that much difference because we can still practice an ecumenical approach, and we can both worship in each other's houses of worship without giving up any of the tenets of our faith. We're a pluralistic society and where pluralism reigns in terms of politics, religion, race, and color, it can also apply in terms of our association between different doctrinal approaches to the use of air. *Prima facie* evidence exists that it is, in fact, working that way.” We were able to succeed in fending this off.

When [Air Force] General [Charles A.] Gabriel became chief of staff of the Air Force he told P. X. Kelley, he said, “I don't want any fight over this.” We were very concerned because Gabriel was a [Air Force General William W.] Momyer product, and we were very concerned that

he was going to make this an issue. His previous OpDep, [Air Force General Jerome F.] “Jerry” O’Malley, and the DepOpDep, [Air Force Major General] Perry [M.] Smith, were real crusaders to bring this issue to a head. O’Malley went and took over TAC [Tactical Air Command] and, unfortunately, was killed in an air crash and in a sense that was good for the Marine Corps—we thought, in somewhat of a callous fashion down on the mess decks—because O’Malley was touted to be the guy that was going to be the next chief of staff of the Air Force, and we knew we’d have some real problems. But he went by the board. Perry Smith went over and took over the National War College, but we knew we would hear from him again as he would ultimately get three stars and reemerge. But Gabriel didn’t want the fight.

[Army General John W.] Vessey [J.] didn’t want the fight, although he was one of the ones—when he was out in Korea—who was annoyed by this disconnect between the Air Force and the Marine Corps. So he was hoping that we could solve the problem, but Kelley was not interested in opening it up. Those of us that worked in the vineyard were always looking for little techniques that the Air Force down on the . . . also working the vineyard would try to crank in. They would try to crank a phrase in an obscure annex or appendix to an OPlan [operations plan], which would forward their position. But we would have guys who would alert us to this from down at SouthCom or CentCom or EuCom [U.S. European Command] or wherever, and then we would challenge them in Washington. I’d challenge the Air Force right in the tank and let them know that they had a fight on their hands. So we were able to preempt any major movement, any groundswell, to d——k with the integrity of Marine aviation.

Then an event occurred which was to undo things, in my judgment. Vessey came up with the idea that in order to improve and expand on existing joint doctrine, that the CinCs [commanders in chief] should get involved and the fact those different CinCs were assigned joint doctrinal projects. The one on aviation and air control and air operations was given to EuCom. We tried to fight it, but we were unsuccessful, because we knew that the Air Force would dominate the study out in EuCom. So the best thing that we could do then was to try and get our people out in EuCom to do what they could to preempt. But EuCom came up with this study, and the whole issue then burst forth when the EuCom joint doctrine for air operations landed back in Washington for JCS approval. That landed just about the time that I retired last year. The Navy and the Marine Corps and the naval CinCs objected to it because it was the Air Force party line. Well, over the past year, because it was given impetus by a parallel groundswell, which was taking place in Washington, to wit the JCS reorganization business, that gave impetus to the need for more joint doctrine. In fact, look at the bickering within the services over joint doctrine. “Who says we don’t need to reorganize the JCS and give the

chairman a stronger hand to stop all this parochial bickering?” Well, it was a confluence of a number of bad things happening all at once.

The fact that, and I don’t know how—this is just kind of speculation on my part—[Lieutenant General Thomas R.] “Tom” Morgan, who took my place as DCS [deputy chief of staff] PP&O, also became double hatted as the chief of staff when [Lieutenant General] D’Wayne Gray went up to take over FMFPac [Fleet Marine Force Pacific]. I’ll tell you right now, you just can’t be PP&O and the chief of staff. It’s more than any one man could possibly do. Just being PP&O, you can’t do it all. What you have to do is set your priorities and focus on the important matters. To have the burden of being the chief of staff on top of that was just absolutely, in my judgment, a very poor decision. What happened then is that Morgan was focusing, I’m sure, more upon internal Marine Corps matters as the chief of staff, than he was on his role as the OpDep. As a result, that constant guidance, that constant attention to detail for JCS matters—for interest to the nation but also to protect your own interests—was lacking.

Whether he could have preempted and short-stopped some of these events, I don’t know, but from a practical standpoint he was unable to do it. So the issue, then arose at the beginning of this calendar year, and we tried very hard to get the Navy to understand what was involved in this thing; that it wasn’t just an issue concerning Marine air. It also concerned Navy air, and more importantly perhaps for the Navy’s standpoint, it also impacted on who was going to control space, the tactical use of space. The Navy absolutely needs it. They’re very big into tactical space operations for the use of the fleet. The Air Force, again, sees their same approach of centralized management of all space aspects. So, at least before I retired, I was trying to make sure the Navy was fully aware of what the Air Force was trying to do. I know Tom Morgan continued that, and I’m not so sure that the Navy ever really understood the problem. But I’m talking as an outsider now; I don’t know all the details. I’m sensing that they never did understand.

But at any rate, the issue was joined within the tank and the Commandant fought the battle, but he fought it alone. [Admiral William J.] Crowe [Jr.], of all things, the chairman, Navy officer and a former CinC, pretty much sided with those who went with the central management approach. Obviously, the Army was on board and the Air Force was on board. [Admiral James D.] Watkins of the Navy stuck with P. X., and then, as usual, Watkins went belly up. Watkins is a great philosopher and a profound thinker and one of the most intelligent men that I’ve ever met. He borders on genius, but he is an abstract, conceptual sort of genius. He’s not a practitioner of warfare. He never understood the issue; he was above the issue, and so he went belly up and the Commandant found he was all alone. So we got a modification to definitions, which were reflected in JCS Pub 1 and JCS Pub 2.

While the Commandant has put the best possible face on this thing, because there were some words in there that insured the integrity of the MAGTF, the fact remains that the Air Force has won a very critical battle in control of air: that there will be an air component commander and rest assured, the Air Force will always make sure that they are the air component commander, and that they will have the ultimate apportionment, allocation, and tasking authority concerning air, including Marine air. We lost the battle no matter what the Commandant says and no matter what the White Letter says, and we'll see the problems that will flow from that as exercises and, indeed, operations unfold in the years to come.

The Navy, in turn, will start to see this is just the camel getting his nose under the bottom of the tent. The Navy will live to regret the fact that they didn't support the Marine Corps in this effort, both in terms of carrier air and also in terms of tactical use of space. You mark my word.

Frank: They didn't learn their lesson after the unification fight when they were going to lose everything.

Trainor: Well, they seem to have short memories. I have a feeling that Admiral Watkins has his people so involved in so many esoteric things that some of these pragmatic things, which deal with the wars that we are going to fight as opposed to the ones that we are going to deter, go right by him. But I think it was a disastrous mistake for the integrity and utility of naval forces. More to be heard on this subject as the years unfold, and we find that we get our air taken away from us, and the Navy gets their satellites taken away from them.

End SESSION VIII



## U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lieutenant General Bernard E. "Mick" Trainor, USMC (Ret)  
Interviewer: Mr. Benis M. Frank  
Place: Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, DC  
Date: 13 May 1986

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### SESSION IX

Frank: We're going to talk about odds and ends and your tour up as PP&O, and we're going to talk about the Marine Corps in space. But one of the things I want you to think about, the Marine Corps has been a member, not a member of the JCS but has sat in on JCS ever since General [Lemuel C.] Shepherd [Jr.] was Commandant. [U.S. Navy] Admiral [Arthur W.] Radford, who was a good friend of his, insisted he come over. Then with the enactment of Public Law 416, I think it was, the Commandant was made a member of the JCS for Marine Corps matters. Then increasingly the Commandants, from General [Wallace M.] Greene [Jr.] on made more and more items on the agenda of Marine Corps interest. And of course at the end of General [Louis H.] Wilson [Jr.]'s commandancy the law was passed, which made the Marine Corps Commandant an official member of the JCS.

You sat in on many of the tank meetings and observed Marine Corps operations in the joint arena. How was the Marine Corps accepted? How were the Marine Corps counsels accepted?

Trainor: Maybe you can review and see, because I'm sure we covered the business of the Marine Corps within the JCS. I'm not so sure we covered JCS reorganization.

Frank: No.

Trainor: I thought we covered SOF [special operations forces] although I'm not sure and the antiterrorism, but you might . . .

Frank: I'll check it out.

Trainor: Yes, and including those first tapes because the Beirut thing I may have used that as the lead-in to launching our antiterrorist program. I think we did, which is when we got together within a week after the Beirut incident and we put a team together to start the process.

Frank: I don't recall that. I'll review the tapes and get back to you on that.

Trainor: All right, do you want to go on with the space thing?

Frank: Yes, the space thing.

Trainor: The [U.S.] Air Force and the JCS were big into space and had been for some time. The Marine Corps was on the periphery. The Navy, of course, was big into space from the tactical standpoint and its use for positioning and early warning and things of this nature. [Major General Gregory A.] "Greg" Corliss was the director of plans, and we had frequent conversations about the Marine Corps' role in space. The other members

of the JCS did not see us as being big players except in our role as honest broker as we started to look at this new creature that was going to be created called “CinCSpace,” [commander in chief, Space Command] the Space Command. The Navy had their own Naval Space Command, a specified commander, though, as CinCSpace was emerging, and we started to address that issue in terms of the interests of the naval services to ensure that whatever the organization for space turned out to be that the interests of naval services in the tactical use of space were safeguarded. We used, as the model, the standard CinC approach where you had component commands. This was the role, or the approach, that we were pushing. The Navy concurred with this and this is the unified front that we took as we went into the JCS battle. I think the naval services have been reasonably successful as a result of that. We got things down on paper instead of letting the Air Force or the Joint Staff, which was very light-blue suited [heavily Air Force], determine the organization. We, the Navy and the Marine Corps, pushed very hard for our approach right from the start. We had a game plan, and I think that’s been useful.

In the process of addressing space, both Greg and I became aware that there was relatively little attention being paid to space by the Marine Corps itself, except in the sense that we were talking about it within the JCS arena. This led to many conversations over space and the general Marine Corps’ indifference to it. We started to think about a modern amphibious operation. When are we going to conduct amphibious operations and what are they really going to look like? Well, if you look at the world today, most of the time we’re probably going to be involved in NEO [noncombatant evacuation operations] operations or a presence mission with amphibious forces or landing to bolster some regime. Somewhere along the line, yes, we’ll probably have to conduct some sort of an amphibious operation against a hostile shore, but it will probably be in the context of a third-world power; and, while they will have sophisticated weapons, still the operation would be more in the conventional sense that we are familiar with from the past than the over-the-horizon sort of thing of the future. Not necessarily that that’s the way it would be conducted, but the point I’m making is that our current capability is adequate to do that sort of job. But if you look at an amphibious operation against a highly organized enemy—a Soviet enemy—then you’re dealing with an entirely different ball game. Now, the likelihood of that is significantly low. It would mean that we’re at war with the Soviet Union and I think that likelihood is low. But it certainly would be an extreme case and we should be prepared to deal with the extreme case. In addition to that, there is also the credibility. Amphibious forces are great force multipliers in the deterrence game, and if you have amphibious forces that are powerful and creditable, this complicates the planning calculus of your opposition. In the case of the Soviets, when they start to work out their correlation of forces calculus, they really can’t factor in the amphibious forces with any degree of certainty. That degree

of uncertainty, therefore, is useful in deterrence, which is what the name of the game is today. Therefore, you have to look at the modern amphibious operation against a highly sophisticated enemy, to wit the Soviet Union, in the full context of its capabilities. That means that we have to do business differently than the standard amphibious operation. That means we do have to be way the hell offshore where he doesn't know where we're going to land to take advantage of surprise and all the things that have been written about with the over-the-horizon concept of amphibious operations.

Another thing that it brings into play is the fact that the traditional amphibious objective area, which ranges for rule of thumb purposes from about 3[00] to 400 miles, that changes in the face of the threat. It changes in the sense that there are many more weapons with greater range, greater lethality, and greater precision than ever before. No longer are you just worrying about just Japanese field emplacements that have been buried under the sand in coconut logs that can reach out and hit your warships. No longer are you just worried about aircraft that come from within the region and strike your amphibious task force. You're talking about aircraft and standoff weapons systems and ground-to-surface missiles that are going to be reaching out for hundreds and hundreds of miles. Therefore you are faced with the problem of identifying those targets that can interfere with the amphibious operation and dealing with them. Now that means that you have to have real-time intelligence. It means that you also have to have some sort of an integrated system that can sort things out in terms of their priorities and assign missions in some sort of logical and efficient fashion. The only way you're going to do that is by use of a very sophisticated C3I [command, control, communications, and intelligence] system which you have within your amphibious forces or within your overall battle group, and that is going to be highly dependent upon various space systems because only the space systems are going to be able to give you the 24-hour look down capability and transmit it [in] real time to this integrated system, which will allow the guy who is running the operation [to] manage his battle and take out these targets before they come out and hit you. You hit an LHA [amphibious assault ship] or you hit an MPS [maritime prepositioning ship] ship and, my God, that's almost disastrous. We just can't afford that. Now we're going to take losses in this sort of situation, and we expect that sort of thing, but you have to ensure that you're not going to be totally crippled and the only way you're going to ensure that you're not is to be able to see deep and see all those targets and therefore to act against those targets in some sort of a rational fashion. You're going to absolutely need space to do that.

We, as Marines, have to be major players in the tactical use of space, even more so than the U.S. Army, because the Army in large measure can depend upon the Air Force. For an amphibious operation and Marine operations in that critical period when they first get ashore, our play in space is enormously important. We have to not only convince the

Navy of this and all the space gurus in general, but we have to also make this point within the Marine Corps. I think it's been generally missed. In the Marine Corps, in our amphibious thinking, we are too narrow. We are talking about the gadgets and the gadgets, which will allow us to do the over-the-horizon stuff, the [Bell Boeing V-22] Osprey, the LCAC [landing craft air cushion], all of these things. But those things aren't going to be much good to you if they're going to get blown out of the water. So we have to be looking at space as part of this overall package of the amphibious operation. Imposing within the Navy components for space, within whatever the space command turns out to be, we need to look after our interests as well as the interests of the deep blue Navy when they're well at sea.

It was obvious to both Greg and me that we really weren't doing too much thinking on this sort of thing. There was a space conference a year ago, that is in the spring of 1985, out at Monterey, [California,] and we stacked the deck. We got people out there to talk about space. We talked to Al Gray and he was a firm believer in this and we manipulated things so that he was one of the guest speakers out at Monterey—an operational commander who was going to talk about the operational requirements of space. We also sent a number of our officers who were knowledgeable and who were converts to the cause to the Monterey session. The end result was that there were every bit as many Marines out there as there were Navy types. The Marine Corps came on very strong out there—surprised everybody—but I think we opened some eyes within the Navy to our requirements. In the meantime, we did some proselytizing down at [MCB] Quantico both for The Basic School, AWS, and Command and Staff College, and [we] were successful in that and now, as I understand it, there is a block of instruction concerning the tactical use of space as a requirement for the Marine Corps. Marines that are being commissioned and going through Basic School should be thinking about space. It's absolutely essential if we are going to have a viable amphibious capability in the future regardless of how many amphibious ships we get and various means of delivery and precision weapons of our own. We have to have our hand in space. If we lose our touch on that one, then the amphibious threat is not going to be creditable, because the Soviet Union, they can read this sort of thing as it is. Not only that, we have our own in-house critics here in this country, guys like Dr. [Richard D.] Delauer, former [under] secretary of defense for R&D [research and development], who just feels that naval forces in general can't survive in a high-threat environment much less amphibious forces. So in the days of budget cutting, you're going to get the sort of argument that we've heard in the past, that is "There'll never be another amphibious operation." Maybe there won't be, I don't know, but the point is, getting back to my calculus problem for the Soviets, as long as you've got the credibility, they have to take that into account and therefore you're contributing to the deterrence. But if you waste away in terms of that capability, then he really doesn't

have to worry about you because he knows his sophisticated weapons can come out and get you. We have to be high on the step and on the leading edge and on the tactical use of space and the operational use of space, not only to have our representation felt within the utilization of space resources, but also to be able to counteract the systems analysts and the PA&E [program analysis and evaluation] types who will pooh-pooh the modern amphibious operation because of the sophistication of the weaponry. This should be part and parcel of our advertising campaign on space. I feel very strongly about it. I don't know how, in general, they feel about it within the Marine Corps over the past year. I do know that at least Al Gray was a believer at the time that I retired.

Frank: Was that doctrine center down at Quantico working on these concepts?

Trainor: I don't know. I know the Advanced Amphibious Study Group is looking at Phib [amphibious] Strike 95, looking into the future. I don't know how much space is playing a role in that particular study, but clearly it should if . . . they should not ignore that. That should be part and parcel of their overall package.

Frank: What's this going to do to the traditional role of the platoon leader?

Trainor: You mean the space aspect?

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: Well I think if he's thinking . . . the space aspect is mostly on an operational level. I mean the job for the platoon commander is still going to be the standard job for the platoon commander. When I say that lieutenants coming through The Basic School should be thinking space is that they're not going to stay lieutenants forever. They're going to move on up into the staff and when they move on and say, become an assistant operations officer in a battalion or when they get promoted and they become a 3 [operations officer], they should be thinking about space. They should be thinking about going to that all-source fusion center of intelligence to factor in the threat and the vulnerabilities of the other side as reflected by the all-source intelligence, which includes the satellite coverage. They've got to start thinking about it otherwise the only thing they're going to think about . . . they're going to think about ground reconnaissance, they're going to be thinking about the [McDonnell Douglas] RF-4s [Phantom II reconnaissance motor glider], they're going to be thinking in terms of RPVs, and they're going to be thinking in terms of radio intercept and things of this nature. But if they should also, as part and parcel of their resources, be thinking of what the satellites can give them and also then making demands upon the Navy to provide the various links to the integrated surveillance and targeting capability, which is state of the art right now.

Frank: Has the role of the Marine Corps in NATO planning considerably affected the role of the Marine Corps in the Far East and the Pacific, WestPac?

Trainor: I'm not so sure.

Frank: Has the responsibility . . . in other words, where at one time we were so worried about the Pacific and the Far East and now it seems to me it's all changed around. It's all northern tier and everything else.

Trainor: Yes, that's an interesting point. Let's go back in the history to take a look at that. After Vietnam, everybody just wanted to turn their backs on the Pacific and forget that it ever existed. We were in a time of austerity; we were in a time where you had the [Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Robert W.] "Bob" Komers of the world sitting in the Department of Defense. You had a Jimmy Carter who was cutting defenses to the bone. The focus of all the tension was exclusively NATO and what resources were available were going to rebuild the Army's capability in NATO, which had been drastically drawn down upon to support the Vietnamese War.

Where did the Marine Corps fit into this thing? Well, we were Pacific oriented and we were out in left field. When it came to resources, we were going to take a terrible hit and we were faced with block obsolescence of our amphibious shipping. We were in serious trouble. We needed to replace the ships, which were expensive, but nobody ever saw a real use for the Marines in a NATO contest because of this European continental mind-set and this focus on its central region and the rest of NATO. So, literally, the Marines had to create a reason for being in a European context. When you looked around you looked at the flanks and there really wasn't much—although we played that tune also—there really wasn't much opportunity down in the southern flank. But there appeared to be some merit in showing our value on the northern flank, in Norway and in the Jutland Peninsula.

The Marine Corps, then, went full bore to show our value to the flank of NATO. This, fortunately, coincided with the view of [Army General Alexander M.] "Al" Haig [Jr.], who was the SACEur [supreme allied commander, Europe] at the time, on the flanks. His predecessor had pretty much focused in the central region, but Haig started to broaden things and say, "Listen, we can win in the center and lose on the flanks." The Marine Corps took that opening and ran for it.

I don't think that the Marine Corps ever thought that there was a great likelihood of a NATO war, but if we were going to get a piece of the pie and modernize for the sorts of wars that we were more than likely going to fight, which were going to be the Third World sort of things, then we had to show our utility to NATO because that's where the bucks were going. So, as a result, we went on out there and conducted some exercises up in Norway. It was an ad hoc approach but, as usual, the Marine Corps did a credible job. However we came in for great criticism, criticism that we weren't prepared for arctic warfare in Norway. That was absolutely true; we weren't. But then again, the Norwegians weren't very well prepared for fights in the jungle either. Those that were fighting on their home ground with only one enemy to fight know from which direction he was going to come and they knew what he looked like and what he had

and his capabilities, and they knew the terrain. So it was relatively easy for them to prepare for the single type of war. But where we were—general purpose forces, of course—we had to look around more. Also there was the criticism that we weren't heavy enough, that we were light infantry. People had overlooked part of our package, which was Marine air. In Europe, they thought in terms of the three-dimensional approach. If you're Navy, you fight on the sea; if you're Army, you fight on the land; and if you're Air Force, you fight in the air. We were somewhat of an anomaly because we put all of those things together, but they couldn't break through that mentality of functional approaches and look at us as a combined air-ground team. About the only ones that did were the French. They understood what we were doing and, indeed, started to emulate us. So the criticism was that we weren't prepared to fight in the north; we weren't heavy enough to fight on the Jutland Peninsula against all the Soviet tanks. We were light infantry and, oh by the way, we were kind of jacks-of-all-trades and masters of none and therefore kind of useless. The Norwegians would have us be exclusively winter warfare troops. The Danes would have us be exclusively river crossing defenders. God knows what the Turks and the Greeks wanted us to be, but everybody wanted us to specialize.

Frank: And you had the military reformers.

Trainor: This was before [William S. "Bill"] Lind and the reformists started to emerge. So the Marine Corps came under great pressure so that, "If you really want to play in this sandbox and if you want these resources, then you really have to heavy up and be prepared to fight in a particular environment." The Marine Corps had to walk a narrow line because we had to play that game in order to get the resources, but, by the same token, we also knew that that's not where we were going to fight. We were going to fight elsewhere and we still had to maintain our general-purpose characteristics where we could fight in the desert, in the mountain, in the jungles, and on conventional terrain. We also had a lot of young Marine officers who were so enamored of Norway they got this fixation and there were articles in the *Gazette* that we should gear ourselves more to this type of war. They got, as I say, target fixation. They didn't realize that, in large measure, that a game was being played. I think we—certainly under Generals Wilson and [Robert H.] Barrow—were able to maintain that balance, get our modernization program underway, save what little could be saved under the Carter administration, convince the Navy to address the block obsolescence problem for our amphibious forces, and so forth.

I think we were doing pretty well on avoiding the trap of being focused on one particular region. So we continued looking throughout the entire globe. Then this amazing thing happened, which went to prove that we were absolutely right, and that amazing thing was the fall of the shah of Iran. All of the sudden everybody forgot about Europe and everybody now focused on south Asia. Guys like Komer, who were stating that that was the only war in town—he argued the same thing when he was out in

Vietnam—now all of the sudden he totally abandoned the European scene and focused on Southeast Asia.

Frank: Opportunist.

Trainor: Sure, and guys like Jeff Record [?] jumped on the bandwagon. Now everybody rushed their focus down to Southeast Asia . . . rather Southwest Asia. Then people turned around and said, “Who the hell can go down there?” Because Jimmy Carter, in his January address, had stated that, “This is our vital interest.” That means you’ve got to defend it. You looked around. The only people who could do anything down there were the Marines. So, once again we started to emerge into a position of ascendancy, one which has been maintained ever since and one which allowed us to capture what I think is a tremendously innovative device which is the MPS.

The idea goes back to the ’60s and it was originally an idea which was designed to support the Army. It died because at that time, before our great involvement in Vietnam, there was the political fear that if we had this capability we would be too inclined to intervene in operations. We were nervous having been burned in the Bay of Pigs affair. So the idea died. Then it reemerged when we were looking for quick-fix solutions to the problems in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. The MPS ship, it wasn’t MPS then, but the concept, NTPF [near term prepositioning force] concept was presented to the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps had a little problem with it because we were concerned about what it was going to do to our amphibious shipbuilding program. The Navy didn’t want to put money into amphibious ships. If we gave any excuse by saying, “We can use these commercial ships for our purposes,” that would give them an excuse to cut back. So we had to walk, again, a narrow line. The Marine Corps is always walking narrow lines.

These were existing ships, not specially built. There were existing ships, which would be quickly converted to carry a brigade’s worth of equipment. But they did not have the repair or maintenance facilities, climate control spaces and all that sort of stuff. They didn’t have an over-the-beach capability; they had to come to ports, but it was a quick fix. The Marine Corps got it and it was for one brigade’s worth of gear down in the Indian Ocean. We argued that, yes, we needed the amphibious capability and this would be a complement to our amphibious capability. We were very successful in selling that idea so that it did not impede the development of our replacement program for amphibious ships and at the same time we got the NTPF. And more than that, we were able to sell the idea of having specially designed ships, three suites of them, one basically in the Atlantic basin, one in the Indian Ocean basin, and one in the Pacific basin. Then, as the concept evolved, any one of them would be within 10 days striking distance of any trouble spot in the world. This gave us a tremendous capability. But back in those days we didn’t see this except in the vaguest form, but there was such desperation to come up with a creditable capability against the Soviets for fear that they would move into



Iran. Airplanes get there faster than ships, but the fact is that airplanes really aren't carrying very much. There was an Army study that showed that moving Marines by sea and moving the [Army's] 82d Airborne [Division] by air resulted in the Marines with much greater staying power, being in position in the Indian Ocean before the 82d Airborne is closed and prepared for combat. So, speed is a relative thing. You can't think about when the first airplane lands, you have to think about when the last airplane lands that gives you your on-ground combat capability.

People were turning more and more towards the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps loved it. The Marine Corps exploited it. We didn't worry about the naysayers that said we should be focusing on NATO Europe. We didn't talk about being redundant. We didn't talk or worry about those who argued that if we went with this NTPF/MPS approach that that would kill our amphibious program. We were opportunists of the first order and went for these things and have succeeded in grabbing them. Now we have a capability the like of which we have never had in our entire history. In fact, the nation has the capability the like of which they've never had in history.

These things, particularly this whole MPS thing now, are being viewed with very jealous eyes by our NATO allies. Everybody wants the Marines in Europe because of their air-ground capability, because of their tremendous backup capability both with the MPS and with the amphibious forces from Europe. The poor-boy treatment that we got back in the early '70s has changed around 100 percent. On top of that, the Marines have shown themselves to be very professional. When they have gone to Europe they have done well. We have learned the lessons of fighting in the cold weather. We're still on the learning curve, no question about that, but it's been a dramatic sort of thing that has not been lost on our NATO allies. Needless to say, it hasn't been lost on the Soviet Union and their allies. So we now, as the serendipity which flowed from our necessary involvement in NATO operations as a means of survival and as the result of the misfortunes to the shah in Iran, have emerged as the premier force for employment in the Third World, which includes operations in the Pacific—now reemerging in the midst of people now that they have put Vietnam behind them.

I want to tell you, this drives the U.S. Army crazy. The Army is trying desperately to carve out a job for itself in the modern world. They were faced with the problem of having the bulk of their forces in Europe plus the hostage forces that they have out in Korea. But what other job do they have? The Army is the only service that can't do anything unilaterally. No matter what they do they have the Air Force with them, and have to have the Navy with them unless they're back here in the United States and defending the borders against Canada or Mexico or fighting the Indians and I don't think there are too many of them left. They really can't do much, and they have found themselves tied down in NATO Europe and a concern that, over time, their role there would start to erode

and that they would be pulled back, and that there wouldn't be any Mexicans, Canadians, or Indians to kill. Therefore, they were trying to hack out. And it started under [Army General Edward C.] "Shy" Meyer and it's continued under [Army General] John [A.] Wickham [Jr.], the current Army chief of staff, because they saw the Marines getting the bulk of the out-of-area operations. This gave birth, of course, to the Ranger; it gave birth to the light infantry division, which is light enough to get there but not heavy enough to do anything when they get there. The Army is even playing with the [Bell ARH-70] Arapaho [helicopter], which has the tie-on plates that go on commercial shipping so that you can launch aircraft and helicopters and things of this nature. They're desperate to get a piece of the action. They feel that they have first call on the fast movers, the SL-7 [fast sealift ships], which they don't. They're commonly used in shipping. The Army, to this point, is desperately trying to carve out a place for itself in the third world. No matter what they do they're not going to be able to match the Marines' capability.

We have a unique capability with our amphibious forces, with our MPS forces and with our call on MAC [Military Airlift Command] airlift. Another smart thing that we did was that we started to cozy up to MAC. When we put together our presentation on MPS, which went all around the world to the CinCs and so forth, it was a three part one which showed the Marine and Navy emblems and it showed the MAC shield. We went out and one of the early presentations was given to [Air Force] General [Michael E.] Ryan out at MAC and he was delighted to see that MAC was viewed as a full player within the whole MPS concept. Then we put a Marine colonel as a liaison officer out at MAC with direct entrée into CinCMAC, and we arranged with the Air Force to have MAC people down at our division and ultimately at brigade level, for those brigades that were designated MPS units. What we were really doing was seducing MAC away from their traditional association with the U.S. Army and pointing out that when we go to war MAC is more likely to be carrying Marines than they are to be carrying Army guys. This also drove the Army crazy and is driving the Army crazy today.

Frank: This goes way back though. It goes back to that joint task force . . . what was it—[Joint Task Force] 116 that was out at Okinawa, [Japan]?

Trainor: Yes, but that was on a narrower focus. Right now, we're talking worldwide.

Frank: That was strictly Southeast Asia.

Trainor: That's right. Now we're talking worldwide. We work with MAC. We know what MAC's training schedule is, where they have these training exercises, and we say instead of calling upon Army units to fly—because they've got to have these exercises anyway—we have Marines go with them. We have just absolutely undercut the Army on this sort of thing. I don't tell you that with parochial glee. No, let me take that back. I do say it with parochial glee. But I do believe we are an aerospace, maritime nation, and the Army is absolutely essential to the interests of this nation,

but its primary focus is on the big war. If you're talking about expeditionary-type operations and presence missions and quick reaction and so forth, you're talking the Marine Corps' bag. We should be the ones that are doing it, and, indeed, we are doing it.

Now, the Army is operating on another level and that is low-intensity conflict [LIC] where you don't need these massive forces, where you need specialized forces. However, they're a little vague and all those that talk about LIC have difficulty defining it. I would maintain that we're just as useful in low-intensity conflict as we are in conventional conflict, depending on what your definition of low-intensity conflict is.

Frank: It seems to me that we may be overcommitted though.

Trainor: Well, yes. There's no question we're overcommitted, but then the whole nation is overcommitted. If you look at the JSPD [joint strategic planning document] which the JCS develops, in other words, to develop what the force requirements are for minimum risk level against the threat—both the Soviet threat and the worldwide threat—we don't have enough forces. Yet we still have all these commitments and the threat remains the same, so therefore all of the U.S. resources are overcommitted. Let me put it this way. You have three ocean basins that you have to be concerned about—the Indian, Pacific, and Atlantic Ocean basins—and the attendant land masses around them—Europe, Asia, and the Indo-Persian region. But we only have national capability for only one of those basins.

Frank: There's no more two and a half war.

Trainor: No, that never was. That was smoke and mirrors, but in those days we used to have only two ocean basins to worry about: the Atlantic Ocean basin and the Pacific one. The Indian Ocean basin we didn't have to worry about because we had a very effective surrogate down there in the shah. Well, when that went and things became unsettled down there, we didn't get any increase in forces but we got an increase in responsibilities. All the national resources are overcommitted. So what do you do when you're overcommitted? You try to be flexible. First of all, you think about the requirements in each of the regions. You develop contingency capabilities for employment in those regions. When nut-cutting time comes, if you have simultaneous problems around the world, then you set your priorities and decide where you're going to go first. That's basically the sort of thing we do on a national level; that's the sort of thing we have to do on the Marine Corps level.

In doing this I think it's been very useful. When I grew up—when we developed the Marine expeditionary forces later MAFs [Marine amphibious forces]—there was no such thing as a MAF reinforced or a MAF minus. A MAF was a MAF and it was an integral one and piecemeal from other organization from FMFPac to FMFLant [Fleet Marine Force Atlantic], that was absolutely an anathema to the purists. But that had to die. When we came up with the MPS program where you had to provide both an amphibious capability and an MPS capability, it meant that we had to do something that was an anathema to the purists of 15–20 years

ago, and that is composite, compositing our forces. So the answer, from a Marine Corps standpoint, to the overcommitment of our forces is the compositing concept where we take units from the different FMFs and marry them together. This is a very dangerous and a difficult sort of thing to do, because you're bringing them together at the point of contact. It's been done before; when we made the Inchon landing, we did exactly that. Not only that, we had Reserves involved in the thing. So it's doable. But you have to be careful the way you do it, and you have to think it through and you have to game it. Most importantly, you have to, insofar as possible, have standardization of your techniques and procedures. You need to speak the same language. You say, "Don't we speak the same language?" No, we don't. There's a different jargon, different SOPs that develop in the Pacific than develop in the Atlantic. So we have to minimize those, accepting the fact that the local circumstances, obviously, dictate certain ground rules. In the significant aspects of it, particularly in command, control, communications, and intelligence you have to be operating off the same sheet of music in all of our operating forces, and this goes for the Navy also. We're attendant to that and there's been an awful lot of work that has gone into ensuring that when we for a composite unit, we can composite effectively and operate effectively. So, this overcommitment business is minimized.

Now, it's been my experience that you don't have simultaneous crises; you have sequential crises, usually one at a time. Sometimes there's more than one, but generally in sequence. We can handle that. If we had a worldwide simultaneous series of crises, then we would be overcommitted, all of the services would be overcommitted. Then it's a case of the National Command Authority making decisions as to priorities.

Frank: I had a question here. You've given me a lot to think about. We've always had a problem with the Navy vis-à-vis amphibious shipping. Their top amphibious man was never more than a captain. Has that changed?

Trainor: Yes. Theoretically it has changed, and the change is by written fiat. I'm not so sure that it's changed philosophically. There was this imbalance, as you know. In an amphibious operation the landing force commander [CLF] and the amphibious task force commander [CATF] are coequals when it comes to the planning. But the amphibious task force commander is responsible for the execution of the operation. We would have cases, in the modern amphibious forces, where the Marine general, the CLF, outranked the CATF. We'd have a two star and they'd have a one star. There was no really high-level amphibious infrastructure within the Navy. It was down at the PhibRon [amphibious squadron] and PhibGroup [amphibious group], but no structure above that. We pinged on the Navy over this imbalance for years. A year and a half ago, the Navy finally came on board and established an infrastructure where if we did have a real-time amphibious operation—and even in some of the exercises—a comparably ranked Navy officer would come into play as the CATF. They also increased the amphibious expertise in billets on the staffs. There has

been a move in the right direction, but I think it's probably been paid more lip service than anything else. This has been complicated, because as naval warfare and the sophistication and range of weapons that we talked about earlier have become paramount, the Navy has moved to a new approach called the combined warfare commander . . . no, that's not the term. But it breaks the normal task approach that we are familiar with in the past into components, so that there is the anti-air war component, there's the antisubmarine warfare [ASW] component. This works fine when you're out at sea, but it gets a little confusing when you crank in an amphibious operation. Because in the past, the CATF was in charge of the whole bag, but he no longer is, in practice. That has not yet been resolved and it's something that must be resolved. I think what you're going to have is that the CATF will probably be in charge of certain . . . but there's a lot of work to be done in this area. The command, control, communications, and intelligence integration is so essential and no longer just confined to the small area where the operation occurs. These requirements are so complicated and so enormous and they are inadequate right now. They need addressing. There will probably be a requirement for doctrinal change, although the Marine Corps and the Navy have said that LFMO-1 [Landing Force Manual 01] and [N]WP-22 [Doctrine for Amphibious Operations 22] are still valid. They are, but we have to think through the practical considerations of this enormous type of operation that we're talking about, which probably never will occur unless we're at war with the Russians, which isn't likely, but which we must show the capability of in order to be credible. For lesser operations, we can probably muddle through. But that's not good. We really should be thinking this whole thing through and coming up with the C3I structure that is necessary to conduct the modern amphibious operation. The Navy's got to be a major player on that as well as the Marine Corps.

Frank: What about amphibious shipping?

Trainor: Well, the Navy has always been reluctant to put money into amphibious ships. But, you know, there's always the fight. The submariners want more submarines, the carrier guys want more decks, the surface, amphibious, and mine warfare fellows . . . everybody wants much more than they're going to get. So we have to get in there and fight, and I would say that we have been very successful in fighting this battle. We still say we need a two-MAF lift. We're never going to get that. But if somebody had told me five years ago that we would have, in fact, a MAF and MAB [Marine amphibious brigade] lift of modern ships as we went into the twenty-first century, I would have told them that they were smoking funny cigarettes. But, in fact, we will.

I think a large amount of credit goes to P. X. Kelley and the assiduous way that he manipulated things, and I mean that in the best sense, when he was at the Headquarters [Marine Corps] with requirements and programs and sensitive to the Navy attitudes and the political winds. When he returned from being RDJTF [rapid deployment joint task force]

and became the ACMC [Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps], he already knew the territory and he was able to help General Barrow in achieving the amphibious lift. Guys like [General Thomas R.] “Tom” Morgan have been very useful in it; [Major General Harold G.] “Hal” Glasgow in developing good relations with the Navy and convincing a lot of latent amphibians within the Navy of the need and most of all, influencing the civilian leadership within the Department of the Navy to the need, to wit, [Secretary of the Navy] John [F.] Lehman [Jr.]. So it’s been a tough struggle but I think we’ve gotten more of our share of the pie. Unless Gramm-Rudman [balanced budget act of 1985] and maybe an attitude on the part of the public and the Congress that goes totally against military support, I think we’re well on the way to having this enormous amphibious capability which gives the nation such a terrific capability, not necessarily to fight wars but to deter wars and to show support for our friends and to cause those who wish us ill and our friends ill to always look over their shoulder before they come up with some sort of nonsense.

Frank: I remember P. X. [Kelley] gave a speech at one of the retired officers’ luncheons, and he talked about the problems with the MPS, for instance the water supply.

Trainor: Oh, yes. That was all stuff coming up on the learning curve. Fortunately we were able to get some good experience with the ad hoc NTPF in the Indian Ocean and the various maintenance procedures that we conducted. A lot of that stuff was cranked in the MPS program, which was built right from the bottom up. We also made a great deal of use of the Army’s experience with their POMCUS (prepositioning of material configured to unit sets) gear in Europe. But, even when you do things of this nature, you really don’t know how well it’s going to work until you actually play with it and the stuff comes on board. So in the process, yes, we found some problems but they were all correctable. On a problem scale of 1 to 10, I would say that it probably rates at about .03—all workable things.

We have a different Marine Corps today. It’s different from when I came in as an officer much less when I came in as an enlisted man. It’s different from when I was a, radically different, from when I was a major—let’s say a field grade officer. Indeed, the Marine Corps is radically different in the 10 years that I have as a general. There was a closer association with the past. In other words, the Marine Corps when I became a general officer in 1976 was more akin to the Marine Corps when I was an enlisted man in 1946, than the Marine Corps is today when I first became a general. There’s been that much of a change in attitude, approach, technique, equipment, and in thinking in a 10-year period. It is absolutely extraordinary.

Frank: Do you think the possibility exists that we’re going to lose our identity?

Trainor: No. I don’t think there’s any question of that. I think that the Marines are more self-confident today, with good reason, than they have ever been before. In the past we were always the poor cousin, the poor brother with the small voice, the little fish in the pond with the big fish in danger of

being gobbled up—depending, in large measure, upon friends of the Corps outside of the military services and primarily in Congress and just the general attitude that the public had toward the Marine Corps as being very special, for our well-being. I don't think we have to do that any longer. I think we are so powerful in ourselves and so confident and so professional and so proficient today and so advanced in our thinking that we don't have to fear for our identity and we don't have to fear for our survival.

Look at the things we're doing. Historically, in terms of getting our ground equipment, we have tied on with the Army. But the Army has been a basket case when it comes to their development process, which forced the Marines to move on their own. By doing it in a logical, commonsense fashion, we have been enormously successful.

We don't have the constituencies that the Army has. There are unions within the Army—the Army, airborne, infantry, and artillery unions—and they're all fighting with one another. In the Marine Corps, the Commandant says, "Right face"—the only Service, the only Service where the boss says, "Right face"—and the whole organization turns right. In the Navy, the Army, the Air Force, the chiefs of staff say, "Right face," and they're not sure how many are going to right face. But with us, this ethic that we have of absolute support for the one man has a tremendous advantage for us. We get things done quickly and we come up. Look at the Osprey. What a great thing, and the Army is still playing around for the twenty-first century with helicopter technology, and we're moving ahead with a tilt-rotor. We went for the LAV, an off-the-shelf item, which has been enormously effective, and the Army is still wondering what they're going to have. Lots of Army folks would just love to be able to do things the way the Marine Corps does and get the sort of stuff that we have. Our family of infantry weapons, the SMAW (shoulder launched multipurpose assault weapon), the SAW (squad automatic weapon), all of these things. The SMAW coming up with an AT [antitank] round on it—terrific! All of this stuff is terrific and I haven't even mentioned the man power, which has improved so dramatically in terms of quality from the horrible days that I related to you earlier in these interviews.

So, no, the Marine Corps identity is stronger than ever and Marine Corps pride I think, is more justified than ever. I think we are improving our training, something I've always criticized that we boasted to be everything for the rifleman and yet we really didn't do a very good job of training the rifleman. I think we addressed this in an earlier session. That's being rectified. Now we're coming on with an MOS [military occupational specialty] for infantry training other than the ITS [integrated training system] sort of thing. We will have really skilled infantry types, and when the Marines get into action they are going to be absolutely as proficient and professional as any organization that has ever fought. I think a classic example of that is the prima facie evidence of the Grenada operation. You were intimately involved in recording those events. The Marines operated beautifully in comparison with the Army.

I know we get our critics. You get Bill Lind and people like that, but those fellows have their own conception as to the way things should be done. They're usually unilateral in their approach, and, as a result, they accuse us of a recipe mentality but in fact what they're talking about is a recipe mentality. If you don't follow their recipe, you're wrong. The Marine Corps has always taught, in terms of its operations, here are the principles, here are the fundamentals, and how you apply them is the sort of thing that officers get paid to determine; and you're pragmatic and flexible. Sometimes we do it well, and sometimes we do it poorly. I saw in Vietnam, sometimes we did it extremely well and other times we did it terribly. In those instances, I think it was that we had people that were out there doing jobs that they weren't qualified to do.

That has changed. We're keeping people in command a little bit longer. We're being more selective about the people that are put in commands. We're being innovative on our training and very, very professional, not superficial. We have good troops, good training, good professional development for the officers, good leadership, good equipment, good concepts, high morale, [and] a psychologically positive attitude. The Marine Corps has never been better, and the country is blessed by that.

Frank: We're certainly not having the troubles with the development of new equipment as the Army is with that [M26] Pershing [tank] or that armored . . .

Trainor: The Bradley, the Bradley armored vehicle. Yes, that's become a political football.

Frank: They've been falling all over themselves on that.

Trainor: Well it depends if somebody wants to do a hatchet job on you, they can do it. If somebody wanted to take on the Marines and the LAV, they could have done that. I could have written articles for *The Washington Post* that talked about "You've got something that can't stand up against a tank; the Marine Corps doesn't even know how they're going to use this thing." All of which were true. But that doesn't change. We'll probably get it with the Osprey. You already see the criticisms that the Marines really . . . it doesn't match their current concepts, their thinking with the Osprey. The Osprey can't carry as many as the helicopter; it's going to go farther than the Marine Corps can support, etc., etc. Well, you know, that's a backward-looking sort of thing. You have to approach it as equipment follows ideas, and ideas follow equipment. They're not mutually exclusive. When we have a capability, we'll find the techniques to exploit that capability.

The naysayers who attack a particular weapons system as they have done with the Bradley . . . I suspect there may be a lot of ax-grinding involved with something like that, without addressing the merits of the particular vehicle. But if somebody gets something that's a high-ticket item on the skyline and they want to attack it, they can attack it. Whether it's Army or Marine Corps, it doesn't make any difference. We have just, perhaps, been luckier than the Army.



Frank: How would you sum up your time in the Marine Corps?  
Trainor: Let's leave that for another session. I have to give some thought to that.  
There are other things I still think we ought to be talking about here.

End SESSION IX

## U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lieutenant General Bernard E. "Mick" Trainor, USMC (Ret)  
Interviewer: Mr. Benis M. Frank  
Place: Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, DC  
Date: 21 March 1988

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### SESSION X

Frank: Let's see, gee, it's two years since we had the last session. Okay. Off the tape, before we begin, I had a couple of things we discussed here, and probably this is going to be rambling and odds and ends. Things may come to mind and let's go off on tangents if we have to. Of course, the most sensitive thing, since you just did the review for my Beirut, [Lebanon,] book, there has been no postmortems—at least I don't know of any—on Beirut. But there's tremendous sensitivity about Beirut. And you mentioned earlier on that there were these several large brainstorming sessions when P. X. [Kelley] came back from Beirut after the bombing. You suggested that there ought to be a general officer who was offered up as a sacrificial goat; they wanted blood. It's interesting enough. I just reviewed [now-Commandant Alfred M.] "Al" Gray [Jr.]'s interview I conducted in '84, and he made the same point. So either it was something that you'd discussed with him or he came to that conclusion on his own. But in any case, this postmortem or sensitivity business is important.

Trainor: Well, with regard to the offering up of the general officer because of the public outcry, I made that remark I believe on Friday night when the Commandant came back, or early Saturday morning. Al [Gray] apparently came to the same conclusion independently. We had not discussed it. He didn't know that I had offered myself up, and I didn't know, until later, that he had done the same thing.

But I have to ask you a question about the postmortems, a rhetorical question. How often has the Marine Corps done a postmortem on anything, any of their operations? Did we ever really do postmortems on our operations in World War II? Did we ever do postmortems on our operations in Korea or in Vietnam? No, we didn't. We put out monographs, and we provided the information. But nobody in the Marine Corps ever goes back to say, "Okay, here are the lessons learned."

Now, I am now on the board of directors of the Marine Corps Historical [Heritage] Foundation, and this is my big crusade with regard to the Marine Corps now. I have recommended to the foundation that they undertake the role, with the blessing of the Commandant, to do a critical analysis of the way we fought in Vietnam, at all levels from the rifleman on up. We did a lot of things right out there, as I mentioned earlier in one of the sessions, but we did a lot of poor things also.

But we have a generation of officers coming along right now that have not heard a shot fired in anger, unless they happened to be in on the Grenada or Beirut operations. And even then, a lot of those fellows are out. It think it's incumbent upon the Marine Corps to look to the past to draw the lessons for the future, both good and bad, and put it in some coherent form for the junior leadership coming along. This applies to Beirut; it applies to Vietnam. We just don't do that sort of thing.

Frank: I don't know; I disagree with you. After World War II, you had a collection of people down at [MCB] Quantico, at the schools, who were both students and instructors. One of the criticisms made by military critics is that the military is too busy studying past wars to look to the future. But there were a lot of lessons learned and derived. There were a lot of people who were friends, who had gone through Basic School and everything else [and] who went to the various divisions. So there was an amalgamation, an interchange of information with people who fought in the central Pacific, as opposed to those who went up through the southwest Pacific. The people who fought on Guadalcanal, of course, were brought back early to give lessons learned. So there was this type of thing. A lot of the IPRs [in-process reviews] that came out and were available down there for research give testimony to that.

Trainor: Well, I don't dispute the fact that during the war, you always take advantage of the people coming back to debrief them and pass it on. But I didn't fight in World War II, but in 1950–51 when we had the Korean War going on and I was getting ready to go out there, I never saw anything that reflected World War II experience in the sense that I'm talking about now. I don't doubt your word that there was some sort of a grouping of experts or people who fought, who did this sort of thing. I don't know if they did it in a scientific fashion or not or if it was just sea stories covering their own fannies for what they did or failed to do, I don't know. What form did they come out in? Where can I put my hand on that today?

Frank: Dave Brown's got them. They've got the IPRs, yes, and in the curriculum.

Trainor: All right, well I'll accept that, but what did we do . . .

Frank: I feel certain . . . pardon?

Trainor: What did we do after Korea? What did we do after Vietnam?

Frank: Nothing much, and of course we're not the only guilty ones. But the thing about Beirut was that it was such an unmitigated disaster and the nature of the assignment. The deployment, as a matter of fact, you pointed out it was a political decision. It wasn't a military decision. It was a political-diplomatic mission. I'm just wondering, with, as I say, the disaster. I'm just wondering if the sensitivities are beyond the Marine Corps, or is the Marine Corps so sensitive, afraid of finding out that it, in fact, did fail?

Trainor: No, I don't really think that's it. I think it's just a relative indifference. I think a lot of people felt it was sui generis and let's get on from there. That sort of thing won't happen again. If you're going to do something like a postmortem, it takes people and it takes resources. The Marine Corps never has the people, the resources, or the time to do it. They're looking ahead rather than looking back. I don't think there's any sense of sensitivity or cover-up in the way that

you imply. I think it's simply that this is a thing of the past; we close the door on it. It was unfortunate and let's step off smartly, which is what we did after Vietnam. We record what happened; a monograph does it. We recorded what happened in Grenada and recorded what happened in Vietnam, but we never analyzed it. I think it's important that we do that sort of thing. Otherwise, we're condemned to make a lot of the same mistakes again.

I'm not so sure that Lebanon was *sui generis*. We're in an age today where there are no military or military actions in the same sense that it was in World War II. Everything since World War II has not been military-political but politico-military. The political aspect of it is always going to be dominant, and the military is simply a reflection of a political goal. So I think we have to accept the fact that the military is going to be used to a greater degree than in the past to express political desires.

We saw a classic example of that just this past week with the dispatch of Army units to Honduras. What was their mission? They were in exactly the same situation that the Marines were in Beirut. I tried to find out what their mission was, and it was a readiness mobility exercise. "Well, what's their mission, training? What are the rules of engagement?" Well, nobody seemed to know. So I think we have to accept the fact that this is the sort of thing that a lot of military forces are going to face in the future. I think we're in an age where military not being used is more useful to the nation than the military used. The value of the potential use of the military for persuasion or intimidation purposes far outweighs the actual use of military force.

Frank: Now [Lieutenant General David M.] "Dave" Twomey, when he was head of the MCDC [Marine Corps Development and Education Command], headed up a study on Grenada with which, apparently, the Commandant was very unhappy. As a matter of fact, he [P. X. Kelley] told me he told Twomey to throw it in the bottom of the safe and never let it see the light of day. And I never was able to determine what his unhappiness or sensitivity about that study was.

Trainor: Well, I think we addressed this in one of the previous sessions.

Frank: Oh.

Trainor: Yes, there was a pretty good piece of work done, and you, of course, were a participant in it.

Frank: No, no.

Trainor: Didn't you do some of the interviews on the way out?

Frank: Yes, I did the interviews and they used that. Of course, [Reserve Lieutenant Colonel Ronald H.] Spector was brought on active duty to write the Grenada monograph. But they came up with a classified . . .

Trainor: Yes, there was a classified one. This was under the auspices of PP&O, and the Commandant saw it. It wasn't that there was anything to embarrass the Marine Corps, but there were things in there complaining about the way the Army and the Navy operated. The Commandant felt it was very sensitive, and it was an election year, and he simply told me to lock the thing in the safe until after the election, which I did. Then after the election he authorized a copy to each of the Fleet Marine Force commanders for them to draw upon—

lessons learned. But I think its sensitivity has been blown out of proportion. You just don't want to point a finger at the other fellow for doing something so sloppily, which is what the Army did.

Frank: JCS has just come out with, and we just go a copy of, the JCS Grenada study, which is classified secret, which I haven't seen. This is how many . . . five years afterward?

Trainor: Yes. Well that obviously the Army did its own thing. The Army did poorly. The Army knows it did poorly, and I think their in-house studies showed that sort of thing. But the fact that the Marine Corps study was held so close was due to its sensitivity toward the Army's feelings. There was no point in having the publicists of the world stir up a fight between the Marine Corps and the Army over Grenada.

Frank: Well, the thing you pointed out when we were talking about Beirut and the bombing, the Commandant was the lightning rod—took all the hits. The administration, Department of State . . .

Trainor: Everybody ducked for cover.

Frank: Ducked for cover, and they weren't hit at all. It was the Marine Corps.

Trainor: That's right, yes. And P. X. had his Irish up and fought back, and it hurt him, and it hurt the Marine Corps. The entire period of his stewardship was colored by the brute experience and some of the clashes that he had up on Capitol Hill. Then he became identified more with the White House than with the Hill, which is the traditional venue of the Marine Corps.

Frank: How should he have handled it? I mean, you pointed out he couldn't have said, "I wasn't in the chain of command."

Trainor: He was in a tough position. His loyalty down was enormous. Here you had [Colonel Timothy J.] Geraghty, who had operated under tremendous handicaps, with too many bosses; he'd done a really superb job. Was he responsible for this thing? Well, he was the senior guy ashore military-wise. But his association was really at a larger level. He was dealing with the embassy, the special envoys that went out there, dealing with the Lebanese and the French; still responsible, but the day-to-day business of the Marines' security was really not his direct concern. The battalion commander . . . how about the battalion commander? Yes, the battalion commander was the guy. The only trouble is poor old [Lieutenant Colonel Howard L. "Larry"] Gerlach, who was nearly blown away himself and remains a cripple to this day. You're going to hang him? No, I still feel that he was remiss, as was the headquarters commandant in providing adequate security. But there was enough blame to go around for everybody. The extenuating and mitigating circumstances; the fact that we didn't know why we were out there; everybody telling us what to do and what not to do. But it doesn't change the fact that our security was poor.

So the Commandant was caught in the bind on this thing. I think that, again, he should have accepted the fact, since we had prima facie evidence that security was inadequate, that the damn place blew up. I think he should have accepted and owned up to it. He should have talked about the mitigating and extenuating circumstances and taken blame where blame should have

been laid. Let me tell you, the inadequate security of the so-called sewer pipe that was supposedly protecting the entrance way was poor. That was ineffective internal security. I think he should have accepted that, but he said that the blame should not be on the poor guy down in the field. Although I think there certainly could have been certain steps taken even though the guy was wounded. He shouldn't have fought the Congress as much as he did in trying to say that there was absolutely nothing wrong, that nobody could foresee these things happening. But then again, this is what a professional soldier is paid to do, not to be surprised by the enemy, and we're all guilty. And then, most of all, and I'll go back to that fundamental point that a general officer should have been fired, symbolically, to show that when something goes wrong somebody has to pay. We did not do that. We're getting into that habit. This is becoming a characteristic, and it undermines the confidence that the American people and the Congress have in the military.

Frank: Let's play "What if." I don't know if there's any value in it, but I've been curious. I have my own theory, but I'm not sure that it's right. Supposing that the president had not said, "I take the blame," and supposing courts-martial had come out of it and both Tim Geraghty and Larry Gerlach had been court-martialed. Would this have opened a big Pandora's box? I think, for instance, a smart defense lawyer could have called everybody from the secretary of state to the secretary of defense, and even the president, and all the advisors down, and [Robert C. "Bud"] McFarlane.

Trainor: Oh, I agree. A court-martial would have been very sloppy.

Frank: It might have had a cleansing effect, too.

Trainor: Yes, I suppose it could have. Of course we're in the realm of speculation.

Frank: It would have satisfied the blood lust of Congress and the American people.

Trainor: Possibly, possibly. You know it's hard to say. The Long [Commission] Report was designed to do that. It was designed to explain what had happened without condemning anybody. So, in a sense, it was an alternative to a court-martial, and a lot of the things that would have come out in a court-martial, in fact, did come out in the Long Report.

Frank: All right. Let's go back to your arrival at Headquarters as PP&O in 1981. What was the situation when you came up there? General [Robert H.] Barrow was Commandant.

Trainor: Yes, General Barrow was Commandant; [Brigadier General] Harry [T.] Hagaman had plans. I got the impression that General Barrow wasn't too pleased with the way plans was being run. I had gone up to sit as head of the colonels' selection board, and the Commandant called me into his office on the Tuesday before the board was due to report out. We had estimated we would report out on Friday. He asked me whether I was going to be able to keep to that schedule, and I said yes, we would; we'd be finished by Friday unless something extraordinary happened. He said, "Good, because I want you up here for duty on the following Monday."

My jaw just about dropped. I was looking forward to going back to the Fleet Marine Force. I felt that I should go to the 2d [Marine] Division. I hadn't been back in the FMF since Vietnam, and I believed I should go there. The 2d

Division was opening up, and that's where I wanted to go, and in many respects I was led to believe that's where I would go. So this came as a big shock to me. While I didn't protest to General Barrow, I pointed this out that I felt that I should be going back to the FMF, and I was looking forward to taking the 2d Division. I'll never forget him; he just looked at me with those Louisiana cold eyes and said that it was his job to make the tough decisions and my job to carry them out. That was the end of that. So I said, "Aye, aye, sir," and that was it.

Well, it was impossible for me to get back up on the following Monday. There were too many things I had to close out down at Quantico. So I think I came up in about two or three weeks after that; left the family in place at Quantico, and I commuted back and forth and took over the plans job. Harry moved on to take over intelligence and he did a fine job there. I don't know what General Barrow's complaint was about Harry, but he didn't leave me a can of worms. There was a very fine staff in plans. Plans always was graced with a lot of talented people.

As I indicated earlier, I was very comfortable in moving into the plans job. I had dealt with that as a lieutenant colonel and as a colonel. It was an area of natural interest for me, and even coming from the Education Center I was up to speed on all the issues, the military and the political issues. So I just stepped into the job. I really liked it. I loved being in plans and PP&O. It was just my cup of tea.

I was working for [Lieutenant General] John [H.] Miller, who was PP&O. He didn't like the job. That wasn't his cup of tea at all. He didn't like the infighting and the matching of wits and this sort of thing that went on in the tank. That just wasn't the nature of the man. So he tended to focus pretty much on the operations side of the house and pretty much gave me a free hand on the plans side.

Now, John left to take over FMFLant and the common thinking around the Headquarters, and I suppose to some degree within the Marine Corps for those that even thought about those things, was that I would fleet up and take over the job, which was the logical sort of thing to do. Surprisingly, [William R.] "Bill" Maloney, who was a contemporary of mine, he got tabbed for three stars and he took over. Was I disappointed? Yes. I was very disappointed. I felt I was eminently qualified for the job, but you do what you have to do. Bill and I have been friends for a long time; we're still bosom pals, and he was PP&O and I continued on as plans. After a year, he moved on to Manpower, and I took over as PP&O.

Frank: What was the General Barrow like? What was the Headquarters atmosphere at this time? What were the major concerns that General Barrow had at this point?

Trainor: Well, I'm stretching back in my memory for this, as it is now 1988 and we're going back some ways. But the Headquarters seemed to function very well. The Marine Corps' reputation was superb. Barrow was a great spokesman for the Corps. General Kelley had moved up from requirements and programs and became the ACMC. He knew how to work the bureaucracy and worked it very

effectively. In R&P [Requirements and Programs], during some of the leaner days, and now as things became enriched by the Reagan administration, he was able to take advantage of opportunities there also. So there was an upbeat mood around Headquarters during General Barrow's term as Commandant.

The issues, of course, were the Lebanon thing and particularly the difficulties we were having with the Israelis. This just annoyed General Barrow to no end. The other major issue was this trend toward jointness and centralization and the things that RedCom [Readiness Command] was trying to do to assume the mantle of guru of all joint matters. So we were fighting that, and in a certain sense we were reactionary but for good reason because we simply felt the jointness crusade, as being espoused by many in the Army and the Air Force, was detrimental to the Marine Corps interests and to the national interests and simply setting up a bigger bureaucracy. So within my province, those were the two areas that got the focus of attention.

General Barrow was leaving. You had the annual sweepstakes as to who was going to take his place. As I understand it, General Barrow's choice was General John Miller. He was very close to John Miller, but I don't think anybody really saw that as a possibility. P. X. [Kelley] seemed to have the thing locked right from the very beginning. He was not only popular within the Marine Corps, but also within the Departments of the Navy [and] Defense and up on the Hill. So when P. X. was named as Commandant, there was no surprise in that; a little disappointment, I think on John Miller's part. He had held out hopes that that would happen, but he went on like a good soldier and served under P. X. as CG, FMFLant. I think General Barrow was a little disappointed. I don't think Generals Barrow and P. X. ever really harmonized. They just came from different cultures; the same as I came from a different culture than General Barrow. While I dealt with him very closely, I came from the Bronx; he came from Louisiana, and he . . .

Frank: Well, different generations, too, in a sense.

Trainor: That's right, yes.

Frank: I think that if you're a Commandant-watcher or a Marine Corps-watcher, you see a whole new era with P. X.: brash, young . . .

Trainor: That's right.

Frank: A new generation.

Trainor: Yes. Now you look back; General Barrow, so reluctant to let go of the older generation. [He] kept on people like [Lieutenant General A. G.] "Dolph" Schwenk, [Lieutenant General Edward J.] "E. J." Miller, and I forget who the third three star was beyond their normal tour. Well, this wreaked havoc within the upper ranks of the Marine Corps. Instead of getting people out and making room for people coming along, he held onto these people longer than he should have. Not that they weren't good people, but there comes a time. But he just was not comfortable with the new generation. He was more comfortable with the old, so he tended to hang on. But I have the utmost admiration for General Barrow. He certainly brought the Marine Corps into the golden age.



General Kelley was in a position to capitalize on that. Everybody expected lots of new and great things from General Kelley. When he came on board, he said, “We have gone through a period of tremendous change, expansion, and modernization. This is the time to hold what we have and let’s absorb all this sort of stuff before we move forward.” And I think that was generally accepted by the rank and file of the Marine Corps for the first two years. But then, during the second two years, I think everybody expected some innovative moves, some new direction. But we didn’t get it. There was no change. We really weren’t doing that much. About the only innovative item came towards the end of his tenure, and that was the special operation capability, the MAU(SOC) [Marine amphibious unit (special operations capable)] thing.

Frank: Were you involved in the planning and preparation for that?

Trainor: Yes. Didn’t we cover this before?

Frank: Yes, we did.

Trainor: MAU(SOC) and the fact that the Army was trying to get our helicopter carriers and we needed a unique capability to do special operations beyond that which we had to do unique operations, raid-type operations. So I think I mentioned to you, I got plans together and operations and each were asked to study whether or not we should move more toward a special operation capability. Plans came back and said, “No,” and operations came back and said, “Yes.” So we had the perfect fight going there. Out of that you can get at the truth, and we came to the conclusion (which the Commandant agreed with) that we should have this capability.

Frank: And you gave it to Al Gray to develop.

Trainor: And we gave it to Al to develop, yes. So I think that was one of the smarter things that the Marine Corps did. Not many people know about our MAU(SOC) capability, and not many people know about our MPS. But the Marine Corps has got such a tremendous punch right now, as I have indicated in previous tapes, that we’re more powerful than we’ve ever been.

Frank: I was down, as you know at [MCB Camp] Lejeune, [North Carolina]—while we’re talking about MAU(SOC)—interviewing people about the Persian Gulf operation. I came back and I gave my trip report to the director, and in it I pointed out that there was some concern that some of the people, I don’t remember where I picked it up . . . I must have talked to some officers who were involved with the JSOC [Joint Special Operations Command] people and so on. The Army is reluctant to let the Marine Corps get their foot in—very unhappy about it. They’re . . . so you may be on a staff. I forget what the thing . . . but I gave the perception that I had received from these officers that there was a reluctance of the Army down at—where is it, Fort Bragg?—wherever JSOC is, to let the Marine Corps have any part of the action or get involved. Anyway, the memo went up indicating what we’re doing to keep track of the Persian Gulf thing. The Commandant jumped all over it and said, “That’s wrong, absolutely wrong!” and there’s no dog-in-the-manger attitude on the part of the Army about the Marine Corps taking part in this.

Trainor: I really don’t know anything about that, Ben.

Frank: Okay. We talked about Grenada, and I made a note here: “Was it necessary?” The thing was a balls up as far as the Army was concerned, and probably a MAU could have done the whole thing considering. But, you know, there’s been a lot of criticism about it: the way it was carried on, the secrecy, the furtiveness, the keeping the press out, and making a big deal. I think we talked about the mind-set of another Iran/Tehran hostage situation. Was it all lights and mirrors, or do you think that it was really a necessary operation?

Trainer: Well, hindsight is always marvelous, and I suppose you could look now at the indicators and say the students were not in any danger. But you couldn’t have convinced any of us at that time.

Frank: You were all convinced of it?

Trainer: Yes, because of the uncertainty. So in that sense, it was a necessary operation because we thought it was necessary.

Frank: There’s a screwy bunch of people down there; they’re liable to do anything.

Trainer: Sure. There was anarchy. We had inadequate intelligence. So this was kind of a case of “it may not be necessary, but we’ll never forgive ourselves if it is necessary and we don’t do anything about it.”

Now, was there an ulterior motive on the part of the White House and the NSC [National Security Council]? There may have been. There are certain indications that that was the case, coming out in the testimony on the Iran-Contra business and the way the NSC worked. But even as we were focusing on the need to rescue the students, we were not unmindful that this would have a tremendous impact and send all sorts of signals around the world that the United States is willing to act.

Now, I was on the opinion (erroneously as it turned out), that the president would take a severe political hit on this. But we had, in the United States, ever since the Vietnam War—really since the Iran hostage thing, I guess—developed an image of being an impotent giant. Therefore anybody who wanted to make mischief around the world could do so and the United States was not going to act. We talked about our policy being deterrence. Well, deterrence is based upon, in the first place, capability. I don’t care whether you’re talking about nuclear deterrence or conventional deterrence; it’s based upon capability. Nobody questioned the United States’ capability to use their military force. The second thing deterrence is built on is credibility, which means your willingness to use that force. And that’s where we fell down in the conventional regime. People looked at the United States as being a paper tiger; and under the Carter administration there was, perhaps, good reason to think just that.

So I think it was important to signal American resolve. And if you’re going to do it—and I’m talking almost Machiavellian—but it’s real politick—morality aside (not that the operation in my judgment was immoral or unethical; I think it was perfectly legitimate). But there was the side benefit of signaling to the rest of the world that the United States had not on the capability but the will to act. That was not lost on anybody, and we have seen, subsequently, the same sort of thing in the strike on Tripoli, [Libya,] against [Muammar] Qaddafi. If you look back on it, Qaddafi hasn’t raised his head

since that time. It was useful, very useful. This modified the behavior of a lot of potential troublemakers around the world.

So, in retrospect I would answer the question of, “Was the operation necessary?” as a qualified “Yes,” under the terms that I have just described.

Frank: There might have been a better place to do it though. Libya was a good place.

Trainor: You’re never the master of your own fate in these things. You deal with the world as it’s dealt to you.

Frank: You were talking about the Iran-Contra affair. Did you know what was going on at this time? Were you aware of all this stuff?

Trainor: I had absolutely no idea, none what[so]ever.

Frank: What are your thoughts? I’d be curious to get them on tape, perhaps for my own knowledge. Your attitude about the assignment of a Marine to NSC staff with the wide license that Lieutenant Colonel [Oliver L. “Ollie”] North had.

Trainor: The NSC staff is made up, roughly, of one-third from Defense [Department], one-third from State [Department], and one-third from CIA. It’s a balance. And I think it’s a legitimate way to go. What happens is a perversion takes place. The fellow goes over there and he’s to represent the military. Now that means the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But when somebody in a hurry turns around and says, “What is the military’s view of that?” the fellow, the bright young officer that’s assigned to the national security staff can’t turn around and say, “Well, I’ll go check.” They would say, “Hey, look, you’re here representing the military. What do you think?” So very reluctantly the guy gives his opinion based upon his best knowledge of the situation. Well, pretty soon that becomes routine, and pretty soon he takes on to himself the trappings of the military in giving his views. Everybody else around when they’re dealing with the subject, says, “Well, the military view is such and such.” So you can see how the perversion takes place, and then it becomes very, very heady for these officers.

And I think, to a certain degree, that’s what happened with Ollie North. Ollie got over there. He was a very ambitious guy; he was a very committed guy, very talented sort of guy. And when nobody else was willing to work, he was willing to work. He wanted to be in on everything, and he had a certain conspiratorial nature. He liked this sort of thing—the cloak-and-dagger stuff. So he got caught up over there. He found that . . .

Frank: Of course, he was politically attuned to the administration.

Trainor: Well, I’m not so sure that he was politically attuned to the administration. I think, for Ollie, it was more that the administration was politically attuned to him. He kind of had the saint’s vision of the way things should be—halting Communism around the world and fighting the nation’s foes. He learned, if he didn’t already know, that the key to power is information. So he positioned himself where he became the expert on everything. He was the repository of all knowledge, simply because he took the time to get involved in everything. When you had a succession of national security advisors coming in, then who’s the institutional knowledge on “A” subject particularly as it relates to subject “B”? Everybody turned to Ollie. Ollie became a major player simply because he had all the information on events. It was just an easy transition

from being the provider of information to being the doer of the deed. Ollie was always a fast-moving sort of fellow; he was probably two or three steps ahead of everybody else and also the sort of fellow, particularly when [John M.] Poindexter became the national security advisor and who was not inclined to get down into details. Ollie would keep assuring him that “Everything’s under control. This is being done, and that’s being done. I briefed you on that in the past.” So Ollie just became a loose cannon really; well-intentioned but he was holding himself above the law and above the system.

But if I can just make mention of the Iran-Contra affair; the country was absolutely shocked about the arms going to the Iranians. But you have to back off and say to yourself, “What existed at the time?” Here we have these hostages being taken; one of them meanwhile was [William F.] “Bill” Buckley, the [CIA] station chief who was being horribly tortured and tortured to death. Everybody was going crazy trying to get this guy out. All right, so now, the options were very few. One of the options that held a possibility, and only a possibility, was that we could, in effect, buy him out and the others out by giving arms to the Iranians, notwithstanding the talk about moderate Iranians. That’s a non sequitur in a sense.

So, it is ransom, but that seemed to be about the only option available. So how was this ransom going to hurt us? Everybody talked about the Iranians using the weapons against the Iraqis. Well so what? We could care less. The Iran-Iraq War had been going on for five or six years at the time, and it was “the war that everybody loved.” That was the expression that was generally used around Washington, [DC]. The Israelis loved it; the Russians loved it; everybody loved it because it kept the two of them tied up with one another. So what that we gave weapons to the Iranians to use against the Iraqis? It didn’t make that much sense that we should complain about it. But in the United States, we had this hate toward Iran because of what happened in 1979, so that any sort of dealing with the Iranians was considered an anathema by the American people. But you have to understand the contest; at the time we were desperately trying to get people out of their hostage and torture situation.

No, the other aspect of it was aiding the [Nicaraguan] Contras. When it began, it was a violation of the law—the spirit and the letter of the law, the Boland Amendment. And Ollie just saw it as being a very clever sort of thing to do. And that compounded the felony, and that’s unfortunate. But, you say to yourself, “All right that failed.” But supposing it had succeeded; supposing the whole thing had succeeded; we had gotten the hostages out. Supposing the Contras got adequate supplies and the Sandinista regime was either overthrown or was forced to be more democratic. Well, these guys would be heroes. But the fact is that it didn’t work. It was aborted and disclosed, and now, in a sense, they’re being pilloried except you’ll never find Ollie North taking the position that he did anything wrong. As far as he’s concerned he did the right thing, and if he’s convicted of it that’s just too bad. But his mind-set is that he was doing the right thing and everybody else was wrong.

Frank: How does the impact of an Ollie North, or people such as Ollie North in the NSC and the roles that they play, how does it impact the rest of the military, the officer corps in the military?

Trainor: I think people became unhappy and distrustful of military officers going into political billets. I think that's a temporary thing, and prima facie evidence of that was when [Army Lieutenant General] Colin [L.] Powell, who in a sense was indirectly involved in the whole thing, was named national security advisor. There wasn't any enormous outcry. There hasn't been any enormous outcry, after the initial cry, toward military officers being on the National Security Council staff. So I think it was transitory. But I think it has, subconsciously at any rate within the American people, raised some questions about the role of the military in what they perceive is the political arena. Some of them applaud Ollie North, of course, as being a guy who was a mover, a shaker, and a doer when all the rest of the bureaucrats were wringing their hands. So in that sense it's a plus.

Frank: Well, of course there are a lot of philosophical questions, a lot of moral questions involved, such as the attitude vis-à-vis Congress, the role of the CIA and [CIA Director William J.] Casey, the operations outside of normal—this type of thing.

What were the highlights would you say, of your tour at Headquarters as PP&O? Anything that sticks out, major accomplishments?

Trainor: I guess being so scarred by the Beirut thing; I suppose getting the Marine Corps antiterrorist program off the ground and the MAU(SOC) concept. I think those were two very important ones.

Frank: Of course you were able to use you SOG [special operations group] experience, I would say, and develop some concepts, develop some ideas on your part.

Trainor: Well, not really.

Frank: No?

Trainor: No, that was so specialized I don't think that there was any . . .

Frank: Connection.

Trainor: . . . particular value that I drew from that. I had been reading a lot of stuff. I would read the classified stuff; I would read the unclassified stuff. I felt that the world was changing very quickly, and the Marine Corps had better change with it and deal with the problems that they were likely to face rather than the obscure ones that we probably never would face—mainly facing the Russians in either central Europe or upper Norway or someplace else. I think the MAU(SOC) business, the terrorism business; I'm very proud of that.

I guess my biggest disappointment was that I was never able to really get the Commandant and those around him energized to fight the reorganization battle. I think we missed an opportunity. We started to fight it entirely too late.

Frank: You were aware of the dangers inherent . . .

Trainor: Oh, right from the very start. When I saw this thing developing, the first study to come out of the Center for Strategic and International Studies and I saw who was on the group that did it, it was a stacked deck with [retired Air Force

General David C.] “Davy” Jones pushing for the thing. Then there were some people up on the Hill that wanted it, and I felt that the Marine Corps really had to (and the Navy had to) get themselves energized and organized, and they never did. The only guy that really started to move out was the secretary of the Navy, John [F.] Lehman [Jr.]. But he was so antagonistic, and that’s not the way you fight those battles anyway. You fight those battles with people outside the Marine Corps. You get the friends of the Marine Corps, the Marine Corps Reserves, and the people who are very influential. They’re the ones who fight the battle to short-stop it early on. But there was very little attempt to do that.

Then, in a sense, I was somewhat cut out of it because when the warning signals finally really registered at Headquarters, they put together a group down at Quantico to deal with this thing, and they were coming up with proposed alternate legislation. Well, when you do something like that, it’s a lost cause. Jones and company had a piece of legislation—Goldwater-Nichols [Department of Defense Reorganization Act]—they’re going to ramrod it through, and indeed they did. Then my view was that we’d better accept the fact that this was going to happen and then deal with any damage-limiting strategy to limit the damage. And I think we were somewhat successful in that. I did everything I could while I was on active duty, talking to lots of people outside the Marine Corps, up on the Hill, and in various think tanks to try to slow the train down. Then, when I left the Marine Corps, I continued to do that. I had a three-day retreat down at Fort Lee, Virginia, or Fort Eustis, [Virginia,] . . .

Frank: The transportation center?

Trainor: Fort Eustis, no.

Frank: Quartermaster center?

Trainor: No, where they have the hideaway down there—the CIA.

Frank: Fort May, I think it may be.

Trainor: The Senate Armed Services Committee met off-site down there, and they invited 13 of us down to go over what was the Locher proposal, [James R.] “Jim” Locher, who was a staffer, who proposed major reorganization of the Department of Defense and the JCS and the way they did business. Dave Jones was invited; [Army General Edward C.] “Shy” Meyer was invited, and [Navy Admiral Thomas H.] “Tom” Moorer was invited. Why they invited me, I don’t know, but I was invited and was very outspoken on the issue, to the point that poor old Senator [Barry M.] Goldwater nearly got apoplectic with me. The poor old fellow had gotten weak and senile, but he saw this as his great contribution to the country—his final legacy. I said it was a legacy to folly, and he blew up.

Frank: Which may be one of the reasons it was passed.

Trainor: Well, there’s no question that those who were sponsoring this whole program very cleverly used Goldwater and his standing as a senior statesman to gain support for it. But they euchred him, and he was out of touch with reality. Over cocktails the first night down there, I said to him that he was so proud that whatever came out of this was going to be his legacy. And I said to him,

“Let’s hope that it’s not in future generations considered a legacy of folly.” The old senator didn’t take too kindly to that one. [Laughs] He didn’t talk to me for the rest of the session down there.

But I must say, that’s my major disappointment, that I wasn’t able to do more to stop it. I’m not so sure that there was any more that could have been done.

Frank: You give me a sense of déjà vu when you talk about when they finally recognized the problem they set up a study group at Quantico. It sounds like the post-World War II unification fight where they had the Marine Corps board set up with [Merrill B.] Twining and [Victor H.] Krulak and . . .

Trainor: Yes, except they were successful. And they were successful because they . . .

Frank: Mobilized!

Trainor: . . . mobilized people outside of the Marine Corps, yes. And they were successful because, frankly, they went behind the back of the serving Commandant, who didn’t see the present danger to the Marine Corps.

Frank: Well, I think General [Alexander A.] Vandegrift did, but he chose, because of the nature of the politics of the time with the Truman regime and you know, going to kick the admirals out of the White House—this type of thing. And, of course, you had the Edson Board up at Headquarters with [Lieutenant General Gerald C.] “Jerry” Thomas as Assistant Commandant honchoing that. It’s a great story.

Trainor: It is—a marvelous story.

Frank: It’s a great story.

Trainor: A far more successful one than the . . .

Frank: That’s right, that’s right.

Trainor: . . . 1986 story.

Frank: And where are the [Colonel Robert D.] “Bob” Heinls and the Bill Twining[s]?

Trainor: But they were there, see; we just never got them organized.

Frank: That’s too bad. You were blindsided at the Naval War College when your speech was supposed to have been off the record.

Trainor: No, it was on the record.

Frank: It was on the record?

Trainor: I wasn’t blindsided.

Frank: Okay, why don’t you tell me about that?

Trainor: Well, this was the final episode at the Naval War College. I think it’s called Strategy Week or something and they bring in a lot of influential people from the civilian world—industrialists, politicians . . .

Frank: Like the old JCOC [joint civilian orientation conference] revived in a sense.

Trainor: . . . journalists. Well, no, because they participated, and when I went through the Air War College they had something very similar. It was designed to have an interface between the professional military types and influential civilians dealing with a shared problem—the problem of national security and defense as structured for the particular class that was going through. You get to know one another, and you get the perception and the perspective of somebody else, and they get yours. It’s a great thing, and it’s a very useful thing and the press

is invited to participate in the thing. So there was no restriction; everything was on the record. And I had no difficulty with having it on the record.

I was invited to be one of the speakers. The purpose of the talk was to say that the nature of warfare is changing, a point that I made a little earlier on that things are politico-military not military-political and not purely military. I was talking about the requirements that seem to need to be met these days before you have to commit military forces and the environment in which that currently exists. Now that was the point of the speech. But I was using some illustrations that there are certain dangers emerging—one of which is the fact that the Soviet Union, which is a Eurasian land mass, is jumping beyond its land borders and becoming a deep-water, international worldwide power. . .

Frank: Obviously.

Trainor: . . . in areas where we have traditionally considered our turf because we depend upon our international trade and business throughout the world. We're a naval power; we're a maritime power in general, not only militarily but commercially. I said that as the Soviets move into blue water it is inevitable that we will clash with them. And I pointed out that this is why we have incidents at sea, because we have clashed with them before, and if anybody questions that, even today, look what just happened here in the Black Sea. This is the sort of thing that I was talking about that we will clash with the Soviets. And I said, "The thing will never amount to anything because both sides, and the rest of the world, are so afraid of escalation that everybody will jump in to try to put a damper on the situation and back off." But I said that whatever comes, the perception has to be, because they are coming into our turf, that we were the ones that were the winners at the end of the day, in the final analysis. So this was just one of the elements of the speech that I was giving.

But the fact that I had said that a clash with the Soviets was inevitable, struck [Frederick S.] "Fred" Hiatt, who was a correspondent for *The Washington Post*, at the time. At the end of the talk, he said, "I have my headline for tomorrow," and I said, "You're referring to my remarks?" And he said, "Yes." I said, "Just quote me accurately." Well, indeed he did quote me accurately, but it ran on the front page of *The Washington Post* that a Marine general said that a clash or conflict with the Soviet Union was inevitable. Okay, big deal within the [Capital] Beltway. You read through the article, and it was fairly balanced. He did not take the main thrust of my address, but he did not unfairly quote me. And if you read the piece, within the context, I think, the intelligent reader would understand what I'm saying.

That would have been the end of that except [Samuel A.] "Sam" Donaldson [Jr.] caught the president when he was in the Rose Garden coming to and from some sort of a meeting, and said, "Mr. President, do you agree with the Marine general that said war with the Soviet Union" or conflict with the Soviet Union, I forget which term he used, "is inevitable." It was the president that was blindsided, and the president said, "No, I certainly don't, and anybody that says something like that is looking for a self-fulfilling prophecy," or words to that effect. Then, as I later found out, the president



came in and said, “What the hell was that all about?” and nobody seemed to know. Then he went off and flew to Camp David, [Maryland,] and they briefed him on the helicopter about the newspaper article and explained what had happened. Well, the measure of the man was such that when he got to Camp David he called the Commandant, and he told the Commandant, “Don’t sweat it. It’s nothing to be worried about.” His response to Donaldson’s question—he was blindsided—was, “And tell General Trainor not to worry about anything.” So that was it within the Marine Corps. And I might also add he later found out that my mother, who was very elderly at the time, was very upset about this. So he wrote her a personal letter telling her what a fine fellow I was and the nation needs more chaps like me, which I thought was really something.

But in the meantime, the president’s response, of course, hits national news and it makes not only the newspapers, but *The Philadelphia Inquirer* perverts the thing to say that “Marine general says nuclear war with the Soviet Union is inevitable.” So you can see how the thing got on NBC, CBS, and ABC news that night. So I got instant notoriety not only around the country, but it just went way above the horizon over in Europe in their newspapers. They carried it in banner headlines. So needless to say, it caused a tempest in a teapot for a while, but frankly it didn’t bother me. It never affected my relationships with the Commandant or . . .

Frank: Were you interviewed? Was there a line of reporters coming to interview you?

Trainor: No, not really. The thing had a shelf life of a couple of days.

Frank: Like anything else in this town.

Trainor: That’s right, and that was the end of it. But [laughs] it was a flurry at the time. It was funny when I went to work for *The New York Times* and everybody was looking up a background on me, because they keep these clippings in newspapers on different people. They all found that one on me, so they were kind of interested to see who this Neanderthal man was who had come to work for *The New York Times* and was predicting war with the Soviet Union.

Frank: What about your relationship with P. X. Kelley? You could have stuck around a little bit more. You could have come up for Commandant too.

Trainor: Well, I don’t know that I could have. When I was getting my third star, Barrow was coming out and P. X. was coming in. He called me into his office, he was still in the ACMC’s office, and told me I was going to take over PP&O and [Lieutenant General] Maloney was going to move into [Marine Corps] Manpower. He said, “Now, you have to understand that this is a two-year job, and I would expect that at the end of the two years that you would leave. Now that would mean that you would be going short of required retirement time. Does that bother you?” And I said, “No, it doesn’t.” So I took him at his word. Clearly what he meant was that he wanted to have the flexibility at the end of the two years to either reappoint me, put me in another three-star job, or to go out. But I took him at his word.

So when it came time, I guess, in March of 1985, I was coming up on the end of my second year. I went in to him and said, “You know, when you invited me to take over PP&O, you mentioned it was two years,” and I

reminded him of the conversation. I said, "Two years will be up in June, and therefore I'm going to pack it in and retire so you have the option of finding somebody else." I think it took him by surprise, and he said, "Well, let me think about that. Let's talk after I come back from my trip to WestPac." He came back a few weeks later and called me in and said, "I've thought about this, and I think it is probably the right move. We have to kind of clear the decks and make room for some of the bright young fellows coming along." I said, "Aye, aye, sir," and that was the end of that.

So that's all I can tell you in terms of the events that led up to it. I tendered my retirement, as was expected of me as far as I was concerned, tendered my offer to retire, and he accepted it. So I really didn't have the choice of staying around for a shot at being Commandant. Now, the next thing, was I disappointed in this? Yes and no. No in the sense that I was getting pretty tired. I had been in that arena for five years, and if you don't think that's a tough . . .

Frank: Oh, I would imagine. I was just about to say that.

Trainor: Those days are mighty long, and the nights are mighty short.

Frank: Not everybody wants to be Commandant, especially when you've been up in that type of atmosphere.

Trainor: I was tired, and really not interested in being Commandant. I know people that don't become Commandant say that, but in my case it was true. I really was not interested. It was getting that I dreaded the tank, and I just couldn't see four more years of dealing with the same sort of stuff; it was coming around again. So in that sense I was relieved, and I can genuinely say, for the record and off the record, that I did not want to be Commandant. I'll go back to that point in a moment.

But I was disappointed in the sense that the one thing I did want was to be was the first Marine commander in chief, CinC theater commander. CentCom was coming up and the Marines were going to get CentCom. I wanted that; that's what I wanted.

Frank: Did you ask him for it?

Trainor: Nope.

Frank: No?

Trainor: Nope, I did not. I simply said, "Aye, aye, sir," and that was it. I had made no secret about that, that I was really hoping that I would have gone to CentCom.

Frank: In retrospect, should you have asked for it?

Trainor: That's not my nature. [Laughs] No, no, I was constitutionally incapable of trying to negotiate my career. The rules were laid down as far as I was concerned, the decision was made, and that was the end of that. No.

Frank: Had he known of your wishes . . .

Trainor: I have no idea.

Frank: You hadn't discussed it?

Trainor: Clearly, no, we had not. But I had to be one of the people considered. It had been the talk of all sorts of general officers and people at Headquarters, who was going to take CentCom. It was almost like the days with Barrow as to who was going to take over the 2d Division, and everybody thought I was.

Maybe everybody thought I was going to take over CentCom, but it just didn't happen that way. So, I was disappointed and, in a sense, still disappointed that I didn't do that. Not that I have anything against [General] George [B.] Crist, but the fact is I wanted the job, and that, I felt, would have capped my career. I wanted that; I didn't want the job of the Commandant.

One of the reasons I didn't want the job of the Commandant, other than just being burned out at Headquarters Marine Corps, was the fact that I feel the Commandant of the Marine Corps has to project an image. He has to be looked upon as a great combat warrior. Now, I had my share of combat, and I consider myself a warrior. I fought as a platoon leader in Korea; I did the covert stuff in Vietnam my first tour, then commanded an infantry battalion in Vietnam, and then commanded a reconnaissance battalion in Vietnam. In my junior years, I had lots of command time. I commanded an infantry company, commanded an antitank company, and a reconnaissance company. So I had lots of warrior stuff. But as I became more senior, as I became a general, I didn't. I didn't go and command the 2d Division. I went back to Headquarters. And I just don't think that, particularly at the time, I felt it was very important that the warrior image be projected.

So therefore I didn't see myself as taking that because, through no fault of my own, I didn't get it. I didn't see a guy like [Lieutenant General] D'Wayne Gray getting it either because he doesn't have the warrior image. There are damn few around that had the image that I thought was necessary for that particular job. And the only two that I saw that had it were [Lieutenant General Ernest C.] "Ernie" Cheatham [Jr.], Navy Cross winner, and Al Gray. While Al Gray didn't have the Navy Cross, at least he had a lot of this operational time and kind of had the reputation of being the great warrior. That's very important as far as I'm concerned. I no longer had the warrior image—I was a "staffee."

Frank: Of course, you've had two Commandants in recent memory that didn't have the warrior image.

Trainor: Yes, and I'm not so sure that that was best. Maybe that's one of the reasons I felt that we should have the warrior. The Marine Corps is viewed by the American public as being different, and one of the reasons they're different is because they're viewed as being fighters. We should always enhance that reputation. That's one of the reasons, as much as I like and admire [General Thomas R.] "Tom" Morgan, he was not a warrior. Therefore I could not support him. Now this has nothing to do with the man's talents or lack of talents or any sort of personal attitude.

Frank: It's an image.

Trainor: It's an image as far as I'm concerned, yes.

Frank: We're nearly at the end of the first year for the present Commandant. Do you have any comments on that?

Trainor: Well, yes. I think Al has turned things around. Now what do I mean by that? The perception outside of the Marine Corps was that there was something wrong within the Marine Corps. Those of us in the Corps know that wasn't true. But the perception was there. The perception was there ever since the

bombing in Beirut. Indeed, you could probably say that its roots go all the way back to the perception the Marine Corps was incompetent flying the helicopters in the Desert One operation.

Frank: Sort of a sick Marine Corps—part of the perception. A limping Marine Corps.

Trainor: Yes. This was particularly true after Beirut, and then when we had the case of the so-called espionage cases which were, as it turned out, not quite as serious in any way—in Moscow, [Russia,] in the [Sergeant Clayton J.] Lonetree case. Well I think even within the Marine Corps we were shocked that Marines could violate their special trust, particularly handpicked people that were going on that duty. I think there was a certain crisis of confidence.

Frank: But again, it was outside of the chain of command of the Marine Corps, much like Beirut.

Trainor: It doesn't make any difference. Yes, it may be outside the chain of command, but . . .

Frank: They're Marines; they wear the blue.

Trainor: That's exactly right. So I think there was a little crisis of confidence within the Corps. And I think there was a crisis of confidence because we never did answer the questions of responsibility for the Beirut bombing. I think there were some attitude problems in the Corps and outside the Corps. I think there was the view that the Marines were slipping.

But the American public doesn't want to see the Marines slipping. They want to see them as the image that they hold as the safeguarders and the most competent military force. So when something starts to slip, they want a reason, and if they don't get a reason they want a scapegoat. Kelley, P. X. Kelley, became the convenient scapegoat. "It was all Kelley's fault," and he, in a sense, shot himself in the foot by some of his statements, by some of his arguments with the people up on the Hill and within the Washington area. He was kind of getting the reputation of being the social butterfly and a dilettante because he was showing up in some of the fancy magazines in town.

So it was just a case of him becoming the repository of all that had gone wrong with the Marine Corps. It was untrue, but this was the perception. So when he left, it was as though the devil had been exorcised, and now the Marine Corps is going to be all right because we've got Al, this bright, brash young guy who never went to college, a rough and tumble guy, right out of the mold of Abraham Lincoln and the log cabin. The dilettante was gone, and the devil was exorcised. Now the American people could say, "Okay, everything's fine." The Marine Corps hadn't changed at all [laughter] but the perception was there. So Al Gray, and to his credit . . . a lot of people I know condemn him for this. They feel that he really bad-mouthed Kelley indirectly, but Al, in a sense, was serving the Marine Corps, and that's his responsibility, not to serve a former Commandant. His duty is to serve the Marine Corps, and the Marine Corps needed some revitalization in its own eyes, and most of all it needed revitalization outside of the Corps. Al Gray was able to do that. If toes were trod on in the process, that's unfortunate. If things went awry within the Marine Corps—going around staff procedures—okay, those things will all settle down in time. But either consciously or innately, Al Gray recognized

that something had to be done for the image of the Corps and he was doing it. I'm looking at it from an outsider now, but an outsider that has a very, very good perspective from the view in the media world. I can see the change that has taken place. So Al Gray gets good marks for that. But I do feel sorry that P. X. had to take the hit because he didn't deserve it.

Frank: Do you think P. X., during his tour as Commandant, had a good group of general officers?

Trainor: [Laughs] Of course, I was one of them. I think my relations with P. X. after Beirut somehow, and I don't know why, seem to erode. We were always polite with one another and we dealt very smoothly together. But I did get the sense that somewhere along the line, I'd become . . . I don't want to say persona non grata, but I think Kelley started to distance himself from me. I don't know why. I can speculate, obviously. One of the things was that I always told him right up front what I thought about Lebanon and that didn't necessarily always please him.

He gathered very competent people around him, but their . . . I have heard generals, active and retired, say that he surrounded himself with yes-men, and that he wanted to be the only guy that really looked good. I don't know if that's a valid charge. It may be. I'd be reluctant to say that. But something went wrong with our general officer population.

Frank: Something did.

Trainor: Something went wrong with the people that were selected, but that wasn't his fault.

Frank: No.

Trainor: That's the selection board process. When I look at some of the people that were selected for brigadier general and see some of them [who] were selected for major general, I say to myself, "What did we do with all our talent?" I won't mention any names, but we've got a lot of guys in there that were good colonels but they certainly really didn't understand what it was to be a general. Being a general is a very powerful position, and it is a position that has a great deal of responsibility, and you can't be a narrow technician. You've got to really understand where the Marine Corps fits into the scheme of things and be smart enough and perceptive enough to advance those interests and in the process, at least by my light, the interests of the United States government. But we got a bunch of mediocres, too many of them; not all of them, but there were some of them that I would say . . .

Frank: You're reinforcing something that was said.

Trainor: P. X., as I say, didn't select them. I don't know; I suppose there's a certain body English given off by a Commandant.

Frank: Do you feel that from what your perceptions are, and of course you remained close to the Marine Corps even though you're outside of it, that Al Gray is having a hard time swimming against the tide; that he's going to have a hard time pulling the Marine Corps along with him?

Trainor: Yes, I think there was some resentment on the part of the more senior officers when he became Commandant. There were an awful lot of people that were really supporting Tom Morgan. There were an awful lot, including myself,

that were supporting Ernie Cheatham, and some of them, and I'm sure D'Wayne Gray had his group, but I don't think they were really contenders at any time. So when Al made Commandant, I think there was some resentment, and then I think that was aggravated by some of his kind of talk-to-the-troop stuff as he went around. People were taking that at face value, not realizing that this was just Al Gray's nature.

Frank: He wasn't all that well known, really, to the Corps.

Trainor: Well, he was identified as being kind of an East Coast Marine, FMFLant Marine. I know there was considerable concern out on the West Coast and out in the Pacific as to "Who is Al Gray?" He's a [William S.] "Bill" Lind guy.

Frank: Oh, is he?

Trainor: Well, yes, he was viewed as that. So, yes, there was a feeling against . . .

Frank: Of course P. X. killed . . .

Trainor: . . . him, and P. X. opposed his appointment.

Frank: And kicked Bill Lind off of Quantico.

Trainor: Yes. Then, I think since then, maybe some of that has died down, but I sense there is a certain unease around the Marine Corps right now as to where are we going with the Marine Corps because Al's got so many balls up in the air. And he goes around the normal staff procedure, and you need people to interpret what it is that Al Gray is saying. I think his instincts are right; I think he's going in the right direction. But sometimes things are getting lost in the translation.

Frank: Well, this business with him coming to work at Headquarters in camouflage utilities for instance.

Trainor: Yes, but those are incidental.

Frank: They're incidental, but in this town it has an impact.

Trainor: That can be a plus though.

Frank: It can be a plus, but on the other hand if he pushes that too much to the point where it starts becoming a kind of a laughing matter or a tee-hee type of thing, that once you become an object of derision in this town, no matter what you say, no matter what the value is, it can be devastating.

Trainor: Well, I would agree with you, but I still think that that's less a danger than the business of getting everything all up in the air and talking about change: change this, change that, and then people not knowing what exactly it is that we are changing or why we're changing and where we're going. I think that's a greater danger.

But let me tell you, Al will not be measured on any of those things. Al will be measured on the crisis that comes. Every Commandant has his crisis, and it depends upon how well they handle it as to where they stand in the litany of Marine Corps Commandants. Most of them get it within their first 100 days; at least the last three Commandants have had their crisis within the first 100 days. His first 100 days have come and gone; he has not had the crisis. But he'll have it.

Frank: Whether it's up on the Hill with legislation or the effectiveness of the reorganization.

Trainor: There will be some crisis. It's the unanticipated one. Or maybe it's anticipated, but then it explodes on you. The quality problem that [General Louis H.] Wilson [Jr.] faced, with all the race riots and everything else that was going on; there was the recruit abuse problem with General Barrow; and it was Beirut for P. X. Kelley.

Frank: All right, you served, oh, 34, 35 years.

Trainor: Thirty-five I guess all told.

Frank: Yes, and the Marine Corps has gone through many changes. Have you had the luxury to be able to sit back and philosophize on what you see for the future? And certainly, being up in PP&O you had a great view of things that you were doing and plans that you were doing had to affect the future of the Marine Corps—future roles.

Trainor: Oh, yes, and I think we dealt with some of that . . .

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: . . . when we talked about the MPS and the MAU(SOC). Military force is only of limited use to the United States right now, as I mentioned just a little bit ago. It's the force in "potents" rather than the force in action that is more useful. We're not going to fight the Russians. Wars in the Third World, there's a possibility but there are going to be so many restrictions and so many impediments to committing U.S. forces that when we do the operations they are going to have to be quick, nearly bloodless, and quite decisive. So we'll have some of those, and the Marine Corps can play a major role in those operations. But, the Army, of course, is a serious competitor for those roles. They sent the 82d Airborne Division and the 7th Light Infantry Division down to Honduras; they didn't send the Marines. So they will be competing with us. But the fact remains that the Marines, as a force afloat with staying power, can be discreetly moved around the world, which is the sort of thing we had advertised ad nauseam over the last 40 years. But they're all very true. I still see the Marines playing that sort of role.

I see, in the context of military need in the future, security assistance where we provide assistance to friendly Third-World nations to do their own thing rather than come in and do it for them. So I think that role should grow. But I don't see it growing, because nobody wants to cough up the bucks for it. And I frankly see, over time, shrinkage in the size of the U.S. military forces, including the Marine Corps. Whether the security assistance side gets any benefit from that, I don't know. But as we look around in the budget crunch and we see the unlikelihood of using military force, I think the military is going to shrink. This is, I think, going to happen as we get closer to the twenty-first century.

The Marine Corps must always remain ready to go, ready to fight anywhere. I think we do have to look toward high tech. I spent a lot of time out with Third-World military forces. There's lots of bad actor infantry out there, and they operate very austere on a fraction of what we require for our country. I think if we're going to deal with these people in a combat situation. The name of the game is to kill them and kill lots of them because there are lots of them out there. That means that you have to have the weaponry to do

that sort of thing. I think the air-ground team is geared to do that, although I will say that we have some surprise for ourselves when we try to use our air in the future because of the proliferation of anti-aircraft missiles and other weapons, which are all over the Third World. There are going to be a lot of airplanes and helicopters shot out of the sky.

I would still say that the Marine infantryman is very important. It's my view, in the third world, that the thing that made the British capable of establishing empires in the past, with very few numbers, was the cold steel of the British redcoat. Very small numbers, but the cold steel and discipline of the thin red line scared the hell out of the natives. And that's still the case. Most of the countries—and there are exceptions to this like Chad, like the Iranians, and certainly the Vietnamese—don't want too close in close combat. They like to fight at long range. But when you put well-trained professional infantry forces with cold steel in against them—and I mean that literally and figuratively, when you close on them eyeball-to-eyeball distance to fight and kill them—they're going to break. So you can do a lot with a few. But you really have to have good professional infantry, and you do have to have the supporting arms to support them and make use of your technology against their great numbers.

So I think the Marine Corps is prepared to do this sort of thing. I think also the importance of the leadership of any of these countries that we're liable to get involved in militarily, you take the leadership out—the command and control capabilities of that leadership—and the rest of the army is going to collapse. So we have to make sure that we have the capability of a coup de grâce, but not in the sense of the light raiding force, because that force may become beleaguered themselves but being able to sustain their attack with much heavier forces. The Marines can do that, and we're getting the MV-22 Osprey, which allows this on a worldwide basis.

But the likelihood of us doing that sort of thing, I think, is dropping significantly because of the public attitude that we don't want to get involved in prolonged conflict and the fact that the country has learned that the military really should be your last resort, that you should try other means, other techniques, before you use the military. A classic example of our maturity on that is the way we're putting the economic squeeze on Panama instead of sending the troops in to oust [Manuel A.] Noriega. But the only thing that you can forecast is that which you can't forecast.

Frank: Tell me, talking about your postretirement. I think it would be interesting to get on the record how you became associated with the [*New York*] *Times*.

Trainor: That came as a surprise to me. After I retired the first three months, I did the sort of things that everybody looks forward to in retirement.

Frank: Did you depressure quickly?

Trainor: Yes, I really did. I was tired. I really was burned out. Those first three months were just magnificent.

Frank: You slept late?

Trainor: No, didn't sleep late but came and went as I pleased and . . .

Frank: Let your hair grow.



Trainor: Yes, but it was just a case of there being an enormous weight off my shoulders. The second three months, I started to become involved in lots of things.

Frank: You were how old when you retired?

Trainor: I was 56.

Frank: Lieutenant general's retirement pay is going to sustain you, or would you have had to go to work?

Trainor: I suppose it could have. We could have lessened the lifestyle. We were living in a house that we had bought some years ago, so the payments were very low. Yes, I could have done it with a lifestyle that was cut back.

Frank: But you were too young to really . . .

Trainor: Oh, yes, and I knew it. Right after I retired, I went to Newport, [Rhode Island,] to play in their [the U.S. Naval War College's] annual war game for two weeks. But that was a release more than anything else.

Frank: Sure.

Trainor: I enjoyed that. Then I was doing a bit of consulting here and there; doing some for the War College and doing some for the National Security Council.

Frank: Did you get pinged on by people whom you felt wanted to use you and use your name and your rank?

Trainor: You mean the "beltway bandit" business?

Frank: Yes.

Trainor: Yes, you know, some of these outfits said, "I'd like you to come to lunch and we'll chat" and all that sort of stuff. But I knew that they wanted to use my name and really my background. I was not in the procurement business, so I'm not so sure I would have been of value to them. I was more in the thinking side of the house. So that's why I was doing things with the National Security Council and with the war colleges, things that I enjoyed doing.

The third of the three months, that's when I became very depressed. I really felt that I had to do something more. The things that I was doing were interesting—writing papers and all that—but I used to say to myself, "When I was at PP&O, those things would come and you'd get them a dime a dozen. If you read the executive summary, that's as much as you did." I missed power; I missed influencing the action, and I missed knowing what was going on. Then, all of the sudden, I got a telephone call, and it was from Craig [R.] Whitney of *The New York Times*. He wanted to know if I was . . . no, I have to take that back. I was at a conference up at Harvard [University] on future strategies for NATO, and [Robert J.] "Bob" Murray . . .

Frank: He was on the Long Commission Report.

Trainor: That's right.

Frank: And I met him at the CNA [Center for Naval Analyses] Seapower Conference—"Marine Corps in the '90s."

Trainor: Right, and then he was . . .

Frank: Bright guy.

Trainor: . . . up at the John Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

Frank: Is he still up there?

Trainer: He's still up there, yes. While I was up for this conference, he told me *The New York Times* was looking for a military correspondent to replace Drew Middleton and had been looking for about two years—Mr. Middleton having retired two years prior to that. He said one of the search committees had gotten in touch with him and asked if he had a recommendation. They had gone through a lot of people. He said, "Before I give them your name, do you think you'd be interested in it?" I said, "I don't want to foreclose on any option, so go ahead and give them my name." He did, and then Whitney called me. I, throughout my career, had done a lot of writing for professional journals. So he called me and said he'd like to talk with me, and if I had some samples of my writing, "I'd like to see them."

We met, here in Washington, and we talked for a few hours. He said—and this was in May—"We'll get back to you."

Frank: That was two years ago?

Trainer: May, two years ago. And he said, "We'll get back to you probably by sometime in the summer, one way or another." So I was ambivalent about the whole thing, and I mentioned that to my wife. I said, "I don't know. It sounds very glamorous and exciting, and I'm not so sure that I want to do it. I know nothing about that business." Well the thing that surprised me was I got a telephone call the next day from him, saying that they were interested and would I come up to New York. I said, "Well, I have a number of projects underway, not the least of which is that I'm going back up to Newport to play in the war games" as I had done the previous year. So I said, "I'm really not available until the middle of the summer." They said, "Well, how about coming up for the month of August. We'll put you up in an apartment in New York, and you get to learn the business, and we'll see how it works out."

So after Newport, I went up there and spent the month of August there, and wrote some pieces. As a matter of fact, they were published. The managing editor at the time was [Abraham M.] "Abe" Rosenthal, a very colorful sort of guy.

Frank: Oh, yes.

Trainer: Although the *Times* was transitioning, and he was going into retirement and Max Frankel was taking over. But I was dealing with Rosenthal.

Frank: Warren [M.] Hoge wasn't involved?

Trainer: No, Warren Hoge was there. He was on the foreign desk at the time. So I dealt, yes, a great deal with Warren. At the end of the month, Abe Rosenthal and I went to lunch at the 21 Club, or Sardi's I guess it was. He said, "Well, what do you think?" And I said, "Well, I'm in culture shock, but it is kind of fun." He said, "We like it." I said, "However, if I come with the *Times*, I'm not coming up to New York." He said, "No, you'll work out of the Washington bureau." So we agreed, and then I went through the interrogation, very polite interrogation, as to whether I'd be able to call the shots as I saw them and all that. Did I feel some compunction to . . .

Frank: Protect the Marine Corps.

Trainer: . . . protect the Marine Corps or the military Service? How would I deal with things that I knew from classified sources when I was on active duty and now

had to deal with them in the journalistic world? Well, I had thought about all of those things, needless to say, during the month I was up there. I think we satisfied one another that I could handle that sort of thing. So I signed on, and was still ambivalent about it. And I still am, after almost two years. Although, I must say, I'm becoming far more comfortable in the role. I think I've written some pretty good stuff. My greatest problem was the tradecrafts things; the way you write a newspaper article. That was difficult, but I knew that would come in time, which it has. I can put a story out now pretty fast. I try to get most of the meat of it in the first two paragraphs, although I still don't. I'm still in the habit of coming up with a conclusion down at the bottom, which the editorial desk invariably pulls and puts up at the top, where it rightfully belongs in a newspaper article. So that's the way the thing occurred.

Frank: Have they made it comfortable for you, financially, I mean for long term and everything else?

Trainor: Oh yes. Oh, yes, there's no question about that. The salary and benefits and all that are no different, very generous on that. I'm comfortable in terms of people working with me. They're just absolutely marvelous. Although I do say I probably made a decision that was very important when I first came down to Washington, and they put me in an office with a desk. I was used to, up in New York, working on the news floor, which is just like it appears in a movie. So I said that I was not interested in being a mushroom; I wanted to be out on the news floor so I could learn the business and learn the people and we could benefit . . .

Frank: Did they have a regular news room set up here in Washington?

Trainor: Yes, sure. So I was put out on the news floor just like anybody else. I say it was the right decision; it was the right decision because, indeed, I was able to learn. But more importantly, this strange military guy, this strange general who's coming in our midst who knows nothing about journalism, amongst my colleagues. They appreciated what I did, and they got to know me for who I am, and they saw me like anybody else rolling up my sleeves, sticking a cigar in my face, and doing my work. You have no administrative support, no secretarial support. I think that they say, "Here's a guy that's really willing to learn the business and trying very hard."

Frank: Except you got caught up in the great smoking controversy up there.

Trainor: [Laughs] Well, I really didn't; I simply followed orders. They decided, up in New York, that there would be no more smoking in *The New York Times* except in designated places, smoking areas. Max Frankel, who was a good leader, smoked—smoked a pipe and cigars—and that was the end of that; he stopped. His office, he declared, was also the same as the news floor—nonsmoking. So I simply stopped smoking when I was in the office. Did it bother me? It still does occasionally, particularly when you're working on something that you're very intense about. I got a deal of satisfaction from puffing on a cigar, but you know, you get used to it.

Frank: Well, we've covered a lot of ground here, over two years. I think perhaps this is a good place to stop for now. When you get to see the printed word, you

know, as we spoke off the tape, if there's anything that should be added, please do.

Trainor: Okay.

Frank: I've enjoyed it thoroughly. I appreciate your frankness and I've enjoyed our conversations. I hate to see them end.

Trainor: I've enjoyed it too, Ben.

Frank: Thanks a lot, Mick.

End SESSION X

Appendix  
MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lieutenant General Bernard E. Trainor  
Lieutenant Colonel Michael J. Cross  
Interviewer: Major Terrence P. Murray  
Place: General Trainor's office, Headquarters Marine Corps  
Date: 17 October 1983

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Murray: This is an interview that was conducted on 17 October 1983 by Major Murray with Lieutenant General Trainor who was CO [commanding officer] of 1/5 [1st Battalion, 5th Marines] from July to November 1970, and was CO of 1st Recon [Reconnaissance Battalion] from November 1970 to March 1971.

Trainor: At division.

Murray: Right, sir.

Trainor: And it (1st Battalion, 5th Marines) had the responsibility for the security of Hill 327 [in Vietnam], which was the division CP [command post]. Our TAOR [tactical area of responsibility] really was greater than that, to include the Red Beach area and so forth. Local security was provided by the tenants within the TAOR. Then, when I took over the battalion, the headquarters was on Hill 34. Are you familiar with Hill 34?

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainor: Okay. We also had the responsibility of providing the response to the CIDG [civilian irregular defense group] up in the Thuong Duc corridor. So we worked pretty closely with the local PF [provisional force] Marines also.

Murray: All right, sir.

Trainor: But the main role of 1/5 was in what was called the "Pacifier" program.

Murray: Yes, sir. Now, the Pacifier.

Trainor: Later became . . .

Murray: Kingfisher?

Trainor: Reaction force. Maybe it was Kingfisher before, but essentially what it was is that I would keep one company on the hill, one company on Hill 34, and usually had one company or one company reinforced for quick reaction operations. Now, the quick reaction operations were based upon hard intelligence, which came primarily from HumInt [human intelligence], or more importantly, from SigInt [signals intelligence]. What we would do is have a package of possible targets daily.

Murray: That you would compile the night before or the day before or something like that?

Trainor: Well, these would be developed over time, from intelligence. But we were able to respond very quickly to SI [signals intelligence]. Now, as you probably know, people who are exposed to possible capture could not get an SI clearance. So they made an exception in my case, though, for

efficiency of operation so I could be in when the SI traffic was developing, and it didn't have to be sanitized and so forth, so we could respond quickly to it. That worked out pretty well as I'm going to be able to indicate later on. So we would develop these packages based on intelligence and had regular target folder, if you will, that were being developed.

Murray: That was being developed at what level? The MAF [Marine amphibious force] level or at division level?

Trainor: At division level. Then we would have the quick reaction, the true quick reaction ones, which were the SI targets. So that was a second category of mission for the Pacifier. Then the third category would be the one that you would normally expect of something like that, and that is to take advantage of an opportunity, which had been developed by one of the other units, particularly the reconnaissance battalion. Should they develop something, we knew that we could jump in. So those were the three types of operations that we conducted, and we conducted these things daily. There was a company that would go out every day. Normally, I would go out every day. The package that we would receive consisted of a Huey, which would be my command and control helicopter. I would fly in it along with my S-3 [operations], and we would have our tactical radios in the Huey. I would fly with the—what do we call them—the HD(A), helicopter director (airborne)?

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainor: HD(A), I think it was. I may be short on that term.

Murray: HD(A), I think I've seen HCA as well.

Trainor: HC(A) maybe it was; helicopter coordinator (airborne). Maybe that was it. But at any rate, it was usually the CO of the squadron, so we had equal rank, two lieutenant colonels. The agreement was that either one had a [inaudible] right. This is the way we got over the problem of who was in charge. So that helicopter would come over daily. We would also have a package of usually four [Boeing Vertol] [CH-]46 [Sea Knight], and usually we would have two gunships. We would lay out the mission either the night before the proposed mission, or that morning, and they would come over to us. (This is Hill 34 and they'd pop in; there's the Que Son [Mountains] and Charlie Ridge.) They'd fly over from Marble Mountain to meet up with us, and we would have already figured out what we were going to do. Now, one of the things, as you are well familiar with, the mines and booby trap situation was atrocious out there. So we developed a modus operandi, which proved to be very effective. On none of these operations did we take a mine or booby trap casualty.

Murray: Over what period of time, sir?

Trainor: This was from August until November.

Murray: Running them almost daily?

Trainor: Running them almost daily, except when the weather would interfere.

Murray: That is remarkable.

Trainor: And occasionally we'd stand down. Now the way we did it is that nobody pursued. I was only pursuit by fire. What I would do each of the units would have a different colored patch on the top of his helmet. They'd be red or blue. As a matter of fact, if you look at the map, I think you can, in one of the positions, I think you see white, yellow, and red. Almost like an air panel.

Murray: The geographical area that they were in?

Trainor: Yes, so the guys would have these. Every guy in the platoon, if he was the red platoon, he would have one, regardless of what platoon it was, they would have a patch. Each one of the Marines had these patches, and they would fix them to the top of their helmets according to the color of the day.

Murray: Cloth, sir?

Trainor: Yes, just a piece of cloth. What would happen is that I would usually land two units and would keep one airborne. If they developed a contact, and as you recall one of the usual procedures would be for the VC [Viet Cong] to let you see them and then start to withdraw, particularly down in the Arizona [Territory], they'd start to withdraw and the minute you started to pursue them on foot, you ran right smack into the mines. So we would not do that. What we would do is the unit that made contact immediately pursued by fire, and then the unit that I had airborne, we would put in. We'd do the pursuit by air. So the guys on the ground never had to do any humping, which would put them into the minefields. That worked out very effectively. And I'd simply be able to look down and see the color of the helmets and be able to talk red, yellow, or blue, and that's the way we did the command and control of things. It was quite effective.

Murray: The Pacifier, sir, was originated when? And, whose initiative was that? And when you took it over, that was your script so to speak. Had it been done previously but in a different format?

Trainor: The business of the color designations?

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainor: And this mode of operation? No, the business of the Pacifier had existed and had existed for some time under various names: quick reaction forces. Later on, [Major] General [Charles F.] Widdecke didn't like the name Pacifier, so he turned it to the quick reaction force and it became, then, known as the QRF in short. But it existed. When I took over the battalion, we were already claiming that role. But we were taking the casualties with the mines and booby traps, so I came up with the idea of operating this way so that the troops didn't die. In my view, the war was winding down, and the name of the game was to do the job and let's not have anybody out getting hurt unnecessarily. I felt that sort of thing was killing and maiming Marines, and for what purpose? We weren't going to change the outcome of the thing. The Keystone Charlie business was already underway with the withdrawal. So the idea was to do the job, but don't get anybody hurt doing it unless it was absolutely necessary.

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainor: What we would do is rotate the companies into this duty. So they would go out in the field daily on these things, and then they'd come back and they'd be on Hill 34 after a period of time—I forget, maybe it was a week or something, more than that maybe—or up on the ridge. So we rotated them around.

Murray: So on a given day, one company would be committed to this?

Trainor: Yes.

Murray: And you'd, more generally, have two platoons on the ground and a third platoon in the air?

Trainor: Hovering.

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainor: We had a rule of thumb that if we went in on the target and did not develop anything, we got out of there. So when we'd go out any particular day, we might have three possible targets to go to. The idea behind that was that there was no sense in tromping around out in the bush for no good reason. If we were going in on the basis of hard intelligence, we should make contact, and if we didn't, well there wasn't much purpose to be there, so get out.

Now I must say that I had some problems here. The assistant division commander was [Brigadier] General [Edwin H.] Simmons.

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainor: Who is your boss? And he—I may be misstating it—but I got the impression that he felt that on some instances we should have stayed in and developed the situation a little more. I didn't hold that judgment. I felt we would go in; if we didn't hit it, we had another target to go to. If it was a dry hole, get out, because otherwise you'd start to screw around in there and you're going to trigger booby traps.

Murray: Plus your attention, I think, lapses or the troops' attention would lapse.

Trainor: Yes. So that's the way we operated. Now I was free to operate in the entire division TAOR, and I kept very close coordination with both the 5th Marines and with the 1st Marines and had liaison officers, with radios, in the COCs [combat operations centers] of both the 5th and the 1st Marines; with General [then-Colonel P. X.] Kelley and Colonel Clark [V.] Judge, what had the 5th Marines. The 7th Marines, I won't address them because they were phasing out at the time, and I really didn't work with them most of the time, although I did. But for the most part it was with the 5th and the 1st Marines as the 7th stood down. To give you an example of one of the operations, going back to the one I pointed out before, we had hard intelligence that there was going to be some sort of a meeting right here, Football Island, and right about there. We went on in, in the morning, and landed.

Murray: What time, sir, would you go in on something like that?

Trainor: We went out usually at first light. You can see, these are where the choppers landed, and nothing. The meeting that was supposed to take place didn't take place. Nothing developed so we took off from there. As we were taking off, one of the gun birds, as they were circling over here



(and this was not one of our targets) over here, had spotted somebody with an AK-47 [assault rifle] running into a hooch. So we decided, as we went airborne, to go on in there. So we really executed, as you can see . . . I think I put all three of the platoons in this one. No, I put two in and kept one and one later went down, later on, I forget the sequence. But we started taking fire and the gunships went on in and hit the hooch that they saw the fellow with the AK-47 go into. It went off, and then out of some of the other hooches in the village guys with rifles (AKs) started to sky. So we had ourselves a contact. We went on in, and I would simply radio this back to Da Nang what I was doing and where I was doing it. This was totally unrehearsed. This decision was made as we were coming out of here to go on into this spot.

We landed and the platoon leader of the lead platoon was shot through the heel as they were going into the zone. But I guess we killed a few guys—I forget what the outcome was—and checked out the village and then went off. But that would be kind of typical of the sorts of things we would do.

Now, the one that was a real winner, and I think it's in under the newsletters, is one that took place . . . we had come in for a target somewhere in the sand flats that are out here. It turned out to be a dry hole. So we went on over to [Landing Zone] Baldy. Then we had an indication of a meeting that was to take place that night, or about 1700, somewhere south of Baldy here. I haven't got it marked on here. So we were setting down at Baldy, and then we got some indication that they were already down there. So we went on down, that was about 1300, and went in and landed right on top of this meeting.

Murray: Amazing! And you had gotten that information, how?

Trainor: From the SI.

Murray: Had they given you an update that afternoon?

Trainor: Yes, while I was at Baldy, we got the word from Da Nang. We went on in and caught them and killed them with the exception of one guy, and this was kind of a funny one. This one fellow was running, and he ran right across the front of a squad of Marines. Every Marine in the world was firing at him and never hit him. So there was a lance corporal, I think his name was McReynolds. He was in the paper. He took off on foot, running after this guy and tackled him and captured him. We didn't realize at the time what we had gotten, but it was a real find. This guy's name was Loi, and he was the, as I recall, the political officer of the Quang Da Special Zone. This guy was my age, but, Christ, he looked like he was about 75. He had fought with the Viet Minh up north and now operating down here. He had a pistol on him when he was captured, and he was a real hard-core Communist. Now the interesting thing is our CI [counterintelligence] people did not turn him over to the Vietnamese. They kept him and they kept working on him, but he would not break. As the story was given to me, these CI guys had some skin flicks that they were showing, and they said, "Gee, old Loi might enjoy these." So they brought him out and

showed him the skin flick. And Loi got all agitated and excited, and all of the sudden he started to spill his guts. Then they found out who he was. The payoff then came when Loi told us that here in the Que Son Mountains [pause] . . . He indicated that in one of the draws here, there was a cave and a major complex. We gave him an overflight and picked out the general area and picked out what he thought was the draw and so forth. So in November, just before the Marine Corps birthday, we went on in with two companies. Do you know [Anthony C.] “Tony” Zinni?

Murray: I know who he is. [I] don’t know him personally, sir.

Trainor: Okay. He was one of my company commanders, and he had Loi with him. [Peter T.] “Pete” Metzger, do you know Pete?

Murray: Same thing, sir. [I] don’t know him personally.

Trainor: Pete was the 2 [intelligence] and he was the custodian for Loi. We went in, and I think . . . I thought it was this draw, yes. And we put in people up here, up here, and this is where I went in with my jump CP. Then we put Tony Zinni’s company in down here. I was with a platoon and the mortars here. The rest of the company was over here, and Zinni went in down here. They started on up the draw, and shooting started, and Zinni was wounded. Loi was just shaking like a leaf. He was scared to death.

Murray: Loi was with?

Trainor: Loi was with him (Zinni). He had been targeted and they were going to kill him and things like that. But we were satisfied that we had found the spot. So we got Loi out of there, subject to recall. But, by God, we just couldn’t find anything into it. The second day there was a platoon leader . . . oh, I lost the company commander up here, a guy by the name of Garcia; he was a mustang. And he looked like he had a heart attack. It turned out it was some sort of gastrointestinal sort of thing. But within about five minutes of landing, I had lost both company commanders with Zinni being wounded and this other guy with what we thought was a heart attack. The next day, a lieutenant whose name escapes me (it may be in there) was in the wrong draw, and we were trying to tell him to get over into the next draw, when he found a cave opening. He went into the cave and there it was. It was just a fantastic complex. [Pause]

This (letter) was written on the 10th of November:

“This will be a quick note. Just want to let you know that I am feeling fine and am still in the field. Right now, I am down at Baldy but only for a few minutes. I came down to bring Colonel Judge and General Widdecke up to date on our operation. So far it’s been a huge success, far greater than I thought when I wrote to you in my last letter. The documents we recovered are of enormous intelligence value. The general told me today it was the biggest intel find in the Vietnamese War. Everybody is just out of his mind with excitement: complete dossiers with photos of all the double and triple agents in Quang Nam Province, including the mayor of Da Nang; maps showing VC base camps, headquarters, etc. Almost 100 pounds of documents. In addition, there

were rice storage and processing centers destroyed, over 48,000 pounds of VC rice.”

Murray: So that was kind of a headquarters?

Trainor: Yes. This was their St. Louis records center, Kansas City sort of thing. They had all these coffee cans—you know, the big GI [government issued] coffee cans—and they had the ends cut out of them and they had them stacked one on top of the other, just like a filing cabinet. They had all the documents and photos and all that sort of stuff in there. It turned out there were 300 pounds of documents.

Murray: Was the area guarded or had they just bugged out of there?

Trainor: No, it was guarded. Not what they did . . .

Murray: It’s amazing they didn’t destroy some of it.

Trainor: Well, they made no attempt to destroy it. There was a corporal’s guard, apparently, guarding the stuff. They fired on us, of course, when we went in. Then after the initial fighting, which maybe lasted the morning, and then there was a fight that night. We had a guy wounded that night. To get him out we called in an air strike. That was an interesting one because the air strike came down the valley. They had to release behind the troops, “snake and nape,” and the squad leader that was down in the low ground was screaming that they were bombing. But it wasn’t; the stuff was going over his head. We had to do that to get the guy that was killed and a couple of the wounded out of there.

So there was some fighting, but I wouldn’t call it intense fighting. Then, once that ended, the next thing that they started to do, they were firing from outside of our perimeter to try to draw us away.

Murray: That’s interesting. This was after you had made the find.

Trainor: No, we still hadn’t made the find.

Murray: Oh, okay.

Trainor: Still hadn’t made the find.

Murray: Oh, okay, they were trying to suck you out of there.

Trainor: They were trying to get us out of there by firing from the ridgelines. They were using RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades] and AK-47s. But this lieutenant that inadvertently came across the cave in the next draw over from the one that Loi had indicated to us. The complex, as I say, was fantastic. There were bunks in there, bamboo bunks. It was an enormous cave. I don’t know how long it had been there. Maybe they built it when the French were still around in the Que Sons. There was the CO’s room, private room, hewn right out of rock. He had a bed in there with a spring and a mattress. He had a desk in there. They had cooking facilities in there, and they had water facilities and all of this stuff. The smoke was dissipated from the cooking stove by bamboo pipes, in effect, which ran all through this complex. It was just the most unbelievable thing I’ve ever seen. We stayed in there, I guess we were in there, I guess about a week or 10 days. The weather got very foul. It was during the rainy season. And we finally had to hump our way down. We couldn’t get a helicopter up, so we had to climb down to the valley. But the take was just enormous.

Murray: So the records were the records of agents and double agents for that military region of the VC and the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] then?

Trainor: Yes. Now there should be records of that—of that find.

Murray: Yes, there really should be.

Trainor: The reaction force and all that stuff. It was a fantastic find. Now, this was all kept very quiet though. We never let the Vietnamese know about it. Of course, I wasn't in on that aspect of the case. But as I understand it, (A) the Vietnamese never knew we had Loi, and (B) when this find was made, I think it was pretty much restricted to the U.S. side because of the stuff that was turned up on the guys that were double agents working for the government.

Murray: People in the Phoenix Program, it would seem, those would have been the ones.

Trainor: That may have been.

Murray: The kind of people that needed to exploit that information.

Trainor: Of course, I wasn't privy to all that sort of stuff.

Murray: Right, sir.

Trainor: But we did get all of the documents out of there and destroyed the place. But it was a funny thing; this was the very buy that we had picked up on the Pacifier operation now turned out to lead us into what turned out to be a perfect fall. Other types we had other, more conventional types of operations. The ones that are there I have pictures of.

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainor: They are in the Que Sons, although I think we had some sort of hard intelligence, as I recall it, that there was supposed to be some sort of a speed run which ran by Alligator Lake. So we were . . .

Murray: Speed run?

Trainor: Coming out of the mountains with information, food, agents . . .

Murray: Oh, I see.

Trainor: . . . weapons and so forth. I forget exactly what the operation was designed to do, but it turned out to be not overly productive. We went in at right here and moved here and moved along the bottom of Alligator Lake and across the ridgeline here. Then, in a series of helicopter moves, moved on up.

Murray: Up to Da Noi, [Vietnam]?

Trainor: Up here. The reason I bring that up is because I just happen to have these pictures of that, that particular one. This was . . . again, this was the squadron commander. As I mentioned the two of us would fly together and knock out the group decisions. This is where we landed, right here, and you can see Alligator Lake running like so. We landed here over at this corner, and where that X is, there was a cave. The way we did the operation is he and I and 3, we led out of Baldy with the [CH]-46s in trace. And we were going to have to stay very, very low because we were trying to get them by surprise.

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainer: I guess we had one gun bird, maybe we had two, maybe two to a [CH]-46, I forget. But we came in very, very low, right on up to the LZ [landing zone]. We identified the LZ and dropped smoke and then climbed out. Then the [CH]-46s didn't have to worry about navigation. They just kind of followed us, and when they saw the smoke, that's when they landed. We did have limited success right at the opening. After we climbed out and were coming back and hovering as the troops were moving, we spotted a cave and took fire from a cave, here. So we stayed circling, firing at it. Picked up, again this is using the color code, picked up one of the platoons and moved it by helicopter down just at the bottom of the ridge, and they went up and killed six guys. They had been caught in the cave and they couldn't get out. Then we moved on over. You can see the trail along this ridgeline right here.

Murray: You didn't hit any booby traps in that area?

Trainer: No, no. No, see your booby traps were [inaudible], but on those mountains, we didn't find any. Then you can see this is Alligator Lake here.

Murray: And you jumped out to La Bok [?]/Go Noi [Island] area.

Trainer: Right, and moved on up there. We got up here, which is where, right over on the far side here. This is when we were coming out, but the action took place a little earlier that morning. Some guys came down to the river line over here—there were three of them—for a washup or something. They were unaware that our guys were there, although we had been there, all over there, before. We got three of them, over here on the bank, which would be . . . I'll show you. It was just back up in here and in a little ways. But that was one of the more standard, routine Marine-type as opposed to Pacifier operations.

Murray: You mentioned that you didn't use a zone preparation.

Trainer: Not prep fires, no.

Murray: When you ran [inaudible], did you, or what was the air wing's policy, do you recall?

Trainer: Zone preps. Generally speaking we did not zone prep because normally what we were going after were SI targets, which were normally cadre. So generally speaking we did not have a zone prep. Now, when we went in here, we had a zone prep because we knew that they were forces. But we were not after units. Most of the time we were after intelligence targets. But the decision on a zone prep . . . and zone preps, when we did use them, were strictly or usually an [North American Rockwell] OV-10 [Bronco aircraft] or just the gun birds. But as a rule, we didn't use artillery for zone preps; we used fixed wing. These things would be fast. You go in, develop a situation. If it developed, fine. If it didn't develop, we'd get out. But we were looking primarily to capture people and if not to capture them, to kill them.

So that's pretty much the way we operated with the Pacifier, and that wasn't reflected in the draft as I understand.

Murray: No, sir.

Trainor: Yet, I think it was a pretty interesting way to work. I was able to . . . of course we had the luxury. Not every one of the units could do something like that. I had a command and control helicopter. Now, then I took over recon, and of course my experiences were different.

Murray: That was from 18 November until around 17 March.

Trainor: Yes, whenever [Lieutenant Colonel William G.] Leftwich [Jr.] was killed. I, unfortunately, did not have a command and control bird, which was a deficiency. I had gotten used to it, and it just worked super with 15, but they couldn't dedicate a COC bird to recon. So that brought up the question as, "Why should the recon battalion commander be going out?" I went out on all . . . no, I didn't go out on all of the inserts and extracts. It depended upon what the target was. But I went out on all the emergency extracts. Now, there was some question, "Why should the battalion commander do that" as opposed to running it out of the COC? Well, (A) I had gotten used to this sort of thing with 1/5 and I thought it would be useful. The main reason is one day, early after I had taken over recon, I guess I had been with the battalion maybe a week, and I guess I was still in the familiarization mode. We were on our way to insert a team up on Charlie Ridge, I was in the [CH]-46 (a passenger more than anything else), and all of the sudden we veered and went down to the river, the Song Thu Bon. We were heading on up to Charlie Ridge, and all of the sudden we found ourselves down here, flying along the river. I couldn't figure out what in the hell was going on.

Murray: The pilot made this decision?

Trainor: Yes. Now, what had happened was that when we were on our way, they got some sort of a radio report that some Koreans had overturned a boat, or something like that, in the river, and they were trying to find survivors or the bodies or something like that. This pilot, second lieutenant or first lieutenant, had made the decision to go down there and look for them, whereas his mission was to insert the recon guys.

Murray: You had the team onboard at that point?

Trainor: Yes. I was just absolutely spastic over that one. Then I got to thinking about it, and I said to myself, "Who the hell is running this goddamned thing?"

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainor: You have the recon team; you have the OV-10s; you've got the gun birds; you have on-call artillery; and you have on-call air. The way the thing was running was that it was scenario driven. In other words, here is what we do. We go on in and do this sort of thing. But there was no one guy really in charge of coordinating the whole damn operation.

Murray: Not even the patrol leader, a lieutenant let's say?

Trainor: He was in charge—the insert officer. His job was to insert and extract the team. But that was almost a full-time job. He was concentrating on the team. But now all these disparate parts were pretty much in the hands of the guy who was flying one of the [CH]-46s, who was probably a second

lieutenant [or a] first lieutenant. I said, "Jesus Christ, that's fine as long as it's working, but that's really unsat [unsatisfactory]."

Murray: It really is disjointed.

Trainor: It should have been the same as we had with 1/5. There should be a combination air and ground guy doing this sort of thing. Well, the wing wasn't going to put a squadron commander up on these things. My point was that all right the company commander would go on some of the operations, I would go, so that there would be one guy to communicate with. But I wanted a command and control bird and couldn't get it. It was kind of useless unless you had communications. So we tried all sorts of things. We put radios hanging out the window, and really that's how it ended up—tactical communications being strapped and leaning from the window of the chopper and then also getting in on the net with the pilot. So that's the way we operated to ensure that the thing would work. It was unsatisfactory. There should have been a dedicated package.

Murray: Gee, that's interesting.

Trainor: A dedicated package for the command and control purposes of the insert and extracts. So we jury-rigged a solution, which, in my view, was never quite satisfactory. But during recon operations, what was happening was we were having the drawdown, and the 5th Marines and the 1st Marines spread out to take over the area that the 7th Marines had covered. Then, ultimately, there was going to be the drawdown of the 5th Marines and the 1st Marines. So what we had was the same area but with shrinking assets.

Murray: If I can interrupt you sir, [in] early '70, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion had, in effect, five companies. They were larger; they were over T/O [table of organization]. How about the period you took over, into the spring?

Trainor: No. We sent a company back to the states; took the force recon and integrated force recon into what was left of the battalion. So we were down. We were short one company and had the additional force recon platoon, or force recon company, which was roughly platoon sized by our standards. So that's another thing; we had fewer assets, as a matter of fact. But the area remained the same. That meant that the intelligence was of the utmost importance. We would assiduously develop where we were going to put the teams. We experimented with a number of things. For example, putting in a patrol base where we had indications. For example, let's see just in the Que Sons, we had developed [pause while looking at a map] . . . the recon teams had made a lot of contact in here.

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainor: In this area. So we assumed that this was some sort of line of communication running along here and over in the—what is it—the coal mines or coal pits or something?

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainor: So we established a platoon patrol base here and let the teams operate.

Murray: You had three or four teams operating down there?

Trainor: Yes, out of that patrol base. We did the same thing, with less success, up some place in Charlie Ridge, and then we flew out. But they would

operate out of here, and they were making contact on just about every patrol. So what happened was, this was then beefed up and my old battalion ultimately was established here.

Murray: [The] 1st Battalion, 5th Marines?

Trainor: [The] 1/5. They had a company—the battalion commander was down here—putting in 105[mm]s and this then became, in effect, a firebase. It was very, very lucrative. But with the area remaining the same, and with the assets diminishing, we just had to be very careful.

Murray: [The] III MAF Surveillance and Reconnaissance Center, sir. How did they, or did they at all, interface with division and then with the recon battalion?

Trainor: They didn't [interface] with recon. Now, I'm sure there was the transfer of information to the division. So a lot of the stuff, I'm sure, that the division people were coming up with was probably as a result of that.

Murray: Yes, sir. But your work was at division level?

Trainor: At division level, division level and with the wing guys coming over, but that was on the purely tactical side of the thing. The way it would work is I would develop a weekly plan, which would be approved at division level, and that was simply a point of departure. Then daily we would be reviewing the bidding as to what we were doing. Meantime, the teams could start to bring themselves up to speed on the terrain, the information that we had, and what we suspected. Typically, they were pretty well up to speed on what was happening. Frequently we would get opportunities and we would have to do it in a digested fashion. But the idea was to give the teams as much time as possible to prepare for the mission. Then the morning of the mission (we'd put all the teams in during daylight; we didn't make any night inserts at all), the birds would come on over to the recon CP. We would have the crews and the team and my 2 [intelligence officer] and my 3 [operations officer] and myself and the mission would be briefed, SOPs [standard operating procedures] reaffirmed, [and] any special arrangements between the helicopters and the teams, of course, would all be organized. Then it would launch. We would always have an insert officer, who would, generally speaking, be the company commander—sometimes a platoon commander, sometimes both—and sometimes I would go.

Murray: His role was what, sir?

Trainor: He was to supervise the insertion of the team and to make any decisions with regard to a "go" or a "no-go." That was his responsibility. Even when I went on those missions, I didn't interfere with that. That was his job, to do that or to go to an alternate or ask, "Ride me around once again before we go in there."

Murray: I see. Did you go into dummy LZs?

Trainor: Yes.

Murray: Was there any pattern to that?

Trainor: No. We varied it. We varied the times that we would go in during the day. Sometimes we would go in early in the morning, sometimes midmorning,



noon, afternoon, evening before dusk, so that we would stagger and there would be no real pattern. There was only one real pattern, and that's what I'll get to in a little bit. But we would try to stagger. Sometimes we would go into dummy zones; sometimes we would go into one zone; sometimes we would prep; sometimes we wouldn't; sometimes we would ask for smoke. We did all sorts of things. Sometimes we would ask for artillery to fire on the next ridge over or something like that. But we always tried to mix it up so that the pattern would not be too obvious. The one thing, though, as I say, we never put them in at night. We would take them out at night under emergency extracts.

Murray: There had to be a limitation of the number of different zones you could get into in certain areas, right?

Trainor: No.

Murray: There wasn't? Because I would imagine one of the fears of the teams would have been that we've been in this zone previously. Sooner or later they're going to be waiting for us.

Trainor: No, no, we had no problem with that. Those helicopter pilots were so damn good that even when I was with 1/5 it was the same way. We would go into places which, under safety regulations here today, you'd never go in there. But no, we tried to avoid landing zones that had been habitually used because frequently those were booby trapped. So we would always try to land in some place where nobody would pick it out as a normal landing zone; or if it was a wide-open area, pick some little corner of it. Sometimes we would just land them on top of a crag where the helicopter wouldn't even land. It would simply hover and they'd go on out. So we tried to avoid landing in the obvious places. The teams, of course, would immediately get away from the zone. Then they would usually get the sense of the terrain and see if there was any sort of action, and then they would start to go about their business. One of the most unfortunate things before we left Vietnam, we had consigned to paper our entire procedures; the battle action drills, immediate action drills, and so forth.

Murray: Within recon itself?

Trainor: With recon. Exactly how we reported, when we reported, and all of that was put down—how we'd rigged SPIES [special patrol insertion/extraction system], how we'd conduct inserts, how we'd conduct emergency extracts, and so forth. We put those all on mats so that when we got back to the states we could burn it off and we'd have a record of how to do things before the battalion started to go to the winds after the war. In the transit back to the states, all that was lost. It was perishable stuff that's gone. So we had to learn to invent the wheel all over again, which is really a shame. But let me get back to the point I made about the pattern. The one thing that I insisted on was that the North Vietnamese, or the VC, the last thing they wanted to do was to make contact with a recon team. A recon team was small and they were going to be on them. So we had to psychologically condition the North Vietnamese that if they ran into recon, the best thing for their health and welfare was to get the hell

away. So we had a procedure for emergency extracts that was followed in a pattern. If the team needed an emergency extract, the decision was made back by me in the COC. The COC was set up and monitored all of the teams. If the team called in for an emergency extract, we'd get an assessment of the situation, and I would make the determination because the guy on the ground sometimes—the devil looms large—and sometimes they'd have a guy hurt, and it would be in the evening or something like that, and they'd want an emergency extract. But that was putting a lot of people at risk going out there to get them. So a determination (was made, such as) "Can you wait until the morning, when we can do this thing properly?" Or they just made some contact, leaving a guy slightly wounded. So I would make those decisions. I didn't feel the team leader should make that decision, so I would make the decision. Once the decision was made, the first thing that would happen would be the OV-10, which was always airborne, would make contact with the team [and] get briefed by the team, and we recorded all of this stuff. Now, I don't know whatever happened to all of the tapes, but all of our contacts, the minute the contact went what would happen is that they would throw a switch in the COC. A red light would come on at the entrance to the COC, which meant nobody could come in the COC unless they were authorized in connection with the emergency contact. The radio operator in there would throw a switch and everything would be tape recorded, all the radio conversations. That red light would also come on in my office and the company commander of the company involved and the platoon commander of the platoon involved, if the platoon leader was not with them, would be summoned down to the COC. We'd have the air liaison officer in there and the 3 in there, and myself. Then we would assess the situation there. In the meantime, the minute the contact was made, the air wing was informed and we called the OV-10. We had direct communication with the airborne OV-10.

So the OV-10, then, would now go over and he would circle the team and communicate with them, get the situation, and provide the requested fire support for them. If the decision was made to extract, two gun birds would be launched from Marble Mountain, and they would go directly to the scene and make contact with the OV-10. The OV-10 would brief them and then they would make contact with the team. Meanwhile, the [CH]-46s would be launched from Marble Mountain to come over to recon CP. They would be informed on route as to whether it looked like a SPIE extraction or whether it was going to be a sit-down extraction. If it was going to be a SPIE extraction or we anticipated the possibility of it, when the birds landed we had a team and we had two NCOs [noncommissioned officers] (one by the name of Giles and the other by the name of Popoui) who were the experts in the SPIES. If it was going to be a SPIE extract, they would always go on the mission also. One bird would be rigged for SPIE while the pilots came up, or more likely, we'd go down to the zone if we had all the information we needed. If not, they

would come up. In other words, if it was still a fast-developing situation, they would come up to the COC. If the situation had stabilized, we would go down to the zone and hold the briefing down in the LZ to save time. After the brief we would launch, and I would ride the chase bird. The SPIE bird—the pickup bird—would be the other [CH]-46. Then we would go out and join the OV-10 and the gun birds and go on in for the extract. Now, when the team was picked up and pulled out, the gun birds would be shooting up the area. We would launch two [Douglas] A-4 [Skyhawks] from Da Nang, and the minute the birds were free and the OV-10 and the gun birds left the area, the A-4s would put snake and nape in on the pickup area.

Murray: Was that a change in practice, sir, when you took over? And the thinking there was really to convince them it just wasn't worthwhile to stay in contact with those guys?

Trainor: Right. Then we would have every artillery piece, of general support artillery, that was not actively engaged, targeted on the zone. The minute the two A-4s would depart, then the artillery would fire into the area.

Murray: What span of time, sir, would you estimate, on the average, between the team finally being extracted and either air or arty [artillery] coming in?

Trainor: It was immediate.

Murray: Almost instantaneous?

Trainor: Immediate. In other words, the A-4s would be up there circling as the team would be coming out. The minute the team was out then I'd give the word for the air to go in. So the air would make their run. As soon as the air was free they would report back to the DASC [direct air support center] and they would tell the FSCC [fire support coordination center] to fire, and the artillery then would fire into the area. So the thing was [three quick hand slaps on the desk] just like that. Almost like the reverse of an amphibious operation when the naval gunfire lifts and the air comes in, except we would always have the air go in first so that the target area wouldn't be obscured by smoke. With the artillery it didn't make any difference whether there was smoke out there left from the snake and nape or not. Then the artillery would fire in the end. We just did that in every emergency extract, and we felt that that had a conditioning effect upon them.

Murray: Did you notice, over a period of time, that the emergency extracts became less frequent? In other words, was there a psychological effect or a practical effect of that tactic?

Trainor: I honestly don't know. I really don't know what affect it had on the Vietnamese, North Vietnamese. I know what affect it had on the Marines. The Marines were convinced that that was the case. And the Marines knew that no matter how bad a situation they were in, that, man, they had all the power and majesty of the United States Marine Corps in Vietnam at their disposal. It was a great morale thing.

Murray: Sure.

Trainor: For the cost of it, we were firing H&Is [harassment and interdiction missions] all over the place.

Murray: Just randomly?

Trainor: Yes. So this was being put to good use. I honestly can't judge. I'd be wrong if I said that we were able to measure in any way how the thing worked. I don't know. But it was good. The Marines thought it was great.

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainor: And that worked, I thought, very effectively, and something that you keep. Now, I recognize that at that stage of the war, we could afford the luxury of doing things like that. But if the unit was heavily engaged we might not be able to do it. But if you can do something like that, it's really a super way to operate. So that's basically the way we operated out there. I think something of that nature should be reflected in the history.

Murray: Yes, sir. Were the units—in your experience there and you had the battalion almost five months I guess or approximately five months—were emergency extracts frequent? In other words, I gather from my reading that, let's say you had 40-some teams. Normally you would have almost half in the field on a given day? Or is that a third?

Trainor: A third approximately.

Murray: So what was—just ballpark—your impression of the frequency of emergency extracting a team?

Trainor: Maybe one or two a week. The hairy ones would be the night ones. Then we'd use illumination. One of the – I guess it was a [Lockheed] C-130 [Hercules] flare ship. That was preferred. If we couldn't, we'd use artillery illumination.

Murray: The [U.S.] Air Force would dispatch those right out of Da Nang, sir?

Trainor: Right out of Da Nang, yes. Frequently they'd be airborne, just on a standby—airborne standby for whatever—and they'd simply be diverted over there to provide illumination. So that was an ideal thing. Sometimes we'd get "Puff, the Magic Dragon," [AC-47 or later AC-130 gunships] if he was available to help saturate the area when the team was coming out. The procedures were still basically the same; we simply turned night into day in order to get the team out, and we'd do that with the illumination. But the air illumination was much better than the artillery illumination. It was quicker to get there, more continuous, so you could discreetly adjust it a lot better than you could the artillery, just one pilot talking to control the thing.

So I would say, maybe, two emergency extracts a week. You ought to ask [Lieutenant Colonel Michael J.] "Mike" Cross. He was one of the platoon commanders when I had the battalion. Ask him about his recollection on the thing. One typical instance took place on 23 December up on Charlie Ridge, right here. This is the after-action report. These were due, written up immediately when the team would come back. When the team would come back, before they could do anything, they'd be put into our little briefing room and they would be debriefed.

Murray: After every emergency extract or after every patrol?

Trainor: After every patrol. They would be debriefed and the adrenaline was still flowing and all that sort of stuff. This would all be taped also. Then our intelligence people would listen to the tapes. The troops would go on off and get something to eat and get washed up and so forth. The 2 would go over the tapes and his notes and areas that he wanted developed. He'd call the guys back individually and develop those areas. Then we would put out a patrol report. This would go on up to division, and we would have a backup copy.

Murray: Every patrol also, sir?

Trainor: Every patrol would get this. Now, the reason I have this one is because I was involved in this one and was able to kill a couple of VC in the process. We had two teams, which had met up and came across a base camp, and they attacked the base camp which recon people normally don't do, but they did it anyway.

Murray: Was that their initiative?

Trainor: That was their initiative.

Murray: Who, the patrol leader? Was he an NCO?

Trainor: Yes, two NCOs. So this would be the report of it, and then this is kind of some of the details of it.

Murray: Could I take that with me and look at it?

Trainor: Yes. Sure, you can take all this stuff and return it. But it will pretty much give you the picture of the way things went, including the emergency extract procedures on this thing. We had two guys hurt on this particular operation.

Murray: I'll look through that.

Trainor: I don't have any others except that one, for obvious reasons. Because I was involved in the thing, I kept that as kind of a souvenir. Now I don't know whether the file have all of these reports or not, but that would be a typical report.

Murray: I don't know, sir. I'm not sure. I haven't really gone through recon command chronologies personally. But I'll take a look and see what they have. What about the cycle for the teams themselves, sir, and how important was retraining? Did you have time to retrain between patrols?

Trainor: We ran a school, a recon school, which was classroom work and map and compass and so forth. [Mike Cross enters the room.]

Cross: Sir.

Trainor: How about sitting down and we can start to scrub your brain on some of the recon operations also. [Sound of door shutting.]

Cross: All right, sir.

Trainor: Do you remember the school we used to run for the new guys?

Cross: Yes, sir.

Trainor: That was three weeks, wasn't it?

Cross: If I recall correctly, yes, sir. It ended up with that long patrol on Monkey Mountain.

Trainor: And then training the teams, once a man was assigned to a team, no, we didn't do much of that. The only thing is if there was some new weapon,

some new development, or if they were going in for some special type of mission. But other than that, once they had been joined to a team, the teams didn't do any training. They just operated.

Murray: What about the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] and ROK [Republic of Korea] that you trained? What were your perceptions there, and how did that work out? And also, I guess, they did some patrolling with you as well?

Trainor: No, not when I had recon.

Murray: Maybe it was early in '70. I know that chapter that we have on recon, which is relatively short, touches on the ARVN and ROK Marines having gone through [an] 11-day training syllabus that recon conducted. Again, it may have been a reference to early '70; I'm not sure.

Trainor: Yes, it must have been before my time. We didn't train any ROKs or the ARVN.

Cross: I know the ROKs and the ARVNs were running patrols in conjunction with Marine operations down in the Que Son Mountains. But I think they did their own patrol, but it just was an extension of the Marine operation.

Trainor: No, we didn't work with them at all.

Murray: What about, again this is just a general question, your view of how the Marines who were reconnaissance Marines, who obviously (based on my experience) probably had to deal with stress more frequently than the average infantryman? How did the enlisted Marines handle the regimen that the average recon team went through?

Trainor: Psychologically, you mean?

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainor: No problem at all. We never had anybody who had to go to sick bay or talk to the doctor or anything like that.

Murray: Really? And really, probably, high morale, generally.

Trainor: Oh, yes. We had no disciplinary problems; we had no psychological problems, nobody failing to go on a mission, nobody dogging it on a mission. They were [a] pretty hyped up bunch of guys.

Cross: And generally the NCOs that ran teams ran the teams very well I would say.

Trainor: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, I was out at [U.S. Army Garrison] Fort Leavenworth, [Kansas,] at an Army conference here the week before last, and my escort officer was the maximum security officer at the prison out there, who is a Marine; he's a Marine captain, [Captain Jimmy D.] "Jim" Adkins. It turned out that he was a sergeant and team leader out in Vietnam when we were out there. The NCOs were very good; the troops were very good. The corpsmen, we had no problem. The corpsmen were just as gung ho.

Murray: You had corpsmen on every patrol, is that right, sir?

Trainor: Oh yes.

Cross: Some of the corpsmen we had, though, were Marines.

Murray: Oh, they were?

Cross: Trained Marines.

Murray: Oh, I see.

Cross: Because we didn't have enough Navy corpsmen. You talk about psychological war, being up for it; we had a sergeant that was killed on Charlie Ridge. The weather was so bad we couldn't get him out. The next day there was a possibility that we would launch an airplane with a couple of teams on it to land lower and then walk up to that team. My platoon was getting ready to rotate, and almost the entire platoon was down at the LZ just in case they had to go in. And they were short, three days from going home.

Trainor: Morale was always good. Of course, they lived well when they came back to Da Nang. We fed them like kings and the setup in their hooches was very comfortable. So they had no reason to complain.

Murray: I know you provided security at [Hill] 119 and Hill 200 and maybe [Hill] 141 for the IOD [intelligence operations division] teams. What was your view of this?

Trainor: You mean with recon?

Murray: With recon, yes, sir.

Trainor: No, we weren't doing it then.

Murray: You weren't?

Trainor: No. No, the IODs were still up there. I have them marked on the map. But recon was not providing security for them.

Murray: That was purely done by the ground?

Trainor: By the infantry.

Murray: Because we, maybe erroneously, at least for all of the year that reconnaissance was involved in providing security.

Trainor: I'll tell you what. This probably was a function of training the ROKs and the ARVN and protection for the IOD. That was probably dropped off when the company went back to the states and the units started to draw down and we were covering a much wider area.

Murray: Yes, sir.

Trainor: But the question was asked, what percentage was out in the field at any one time. It was my recollection that we had about a third of them out at one time.

Cross: Yes, sir. I was going to say between a third and a half.

Trainor: Maybe a little more than a third but less than a half.

Cross: But they were constantly rotating, so a team would be out, probably, one patrol in eight days, which was three in a month.

Murray: As we get into the redeployment cycle, you indicated there were fewer troops on the ground.

Cross: Sir, you have a staff meeting in a couple of minutes.

Trainor: Oh, okay.

Murray: I won't keep you sir.

Trainor: Well, you can discuss it with Mike because he can give you some of the details of the actual patrolling.

Murray: Yes, sir. The question is as we redeployed did you change appreciably, the areas that you were patrolling?

Trainor: We didn't go as deep.  
Murray: Didn't go quite as deep?  
Trainor: Didn't go as deep, yes. And as a rule of thumb, I always tried to keep the patrols inside of artillery support, 175[mm] [cannons]. They're not very accurate, but I would be satisfied that if the mission warranted it, but preferably inside 155[mm] range. We couldn't afford to get people way out there and stuck out there plus the fact that our areas of interest and avenues of approach coming in allowed us to commit a little bit close. So we weren't doing the very, very deep stuff. I have to go to a staff meeting. You can talk to Mike.  
Murray: Yes, sir. That's fine.  
Trainor: Now we haven't talked about the rockets and some of the things that we found—the rocket belt activity that recon conducted. So if I can leave you.  
Murray: All right, sir. Thanks. I appreciate you taking the time.  
Trainor: Not at all. And you can take all of that stuff with you.  
Murray: All right sir, I'll leave a note. I'll take a look through this, and I may grab one or two of your newsletters from 1/5 and recon as well.  
Trainor: And I'll see if I can't find those other photos.  
Murray: All right, sir.

End of interview



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