

ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

Lieutenant General Jefferson Davis Howell, Jr.
U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)



Dr. Fred H. Allison
Interviewer

HISTORY DIVISION
Marine Corps University
Quantico, Va.

2008



**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY
MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
3079 MORRELL AVENUE
QUANTICO, VIRGINIA 22134**

FOREWARD

This volume is the transcribed oral history of Lieutenant General Jefferson Davis Howell, Jr., U.S. Marine Corps (Retired). It is the result of a five session interview with General Howell conducted by Dr. Fred H. Allison on behalf of the Marine Corps History Division. This transcript is the work of many individuals most importantly Lieutenant General Howell himself who committed many hours of his personal time to sit for the interviews, then reviewed and corrected the transcript. Volunteer and intern Justin Smothers diligently transcribed most of the interview and Dr. Allison made minor edits to the rough and laid out the manuscript for binding. Stephen Hill of the History Division's Editing and Design Branch prepared and laid out the photographs. Kirsten Arnold did the index for the transcript.

Oral history interviews with distinguished Marines are but one facet of the Marine Corps historical collection effort. Oral history provides primary source material to augment the official documentary records. Oral history is essentially spoken history, the oral account of eyewitness observations, impressions, opinions and perspectives of the interviewee recorded in the course of interview conducted by a historian employing historical methodology. 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 Howell has reviewed and made emendations and corrections to the original transcript, the reader is 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 and distributed to other appropriate offices and libraries around the Marine Corps and other Services. Additional copies are provided to General Howell's alma mater, the University of Texas and appropriate civilian research institutions.

Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer
Director of Marine Corps History
USMC History Division



LIEUTENANT GENERAL JEFFERSON DAVIS HOWELL, JR. USMC
(RETIRED)

Lieutenant General Jefferson Davis Howell Jr. retired from the U.S. Marine Corps on June 1, 1998. In his last assignment he served as the Commander, Marine Forces Pacific/Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific/Commander, Marine Bases, Pacific headquarters at Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii.

General Howell is a native of Victoria, Texas. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1961 upon graduation from the University of Texas with a BA degree. He also acquired an MA in Economics from the University of Texas in 1970. After completion of The Basic School, Quantico, Virginia, he was augmented into the regular officer corps and designated an infantry officer. In addition to The Basic School and completing the Amphibious Warfare correspondence course, General Howell has attended the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, Virginia, and the Air War College, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

His early assignments as an infantry officer included training and testing regiment, Quantico, Virginia; 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, Camp Pendleton, California; 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, Okinawa; and 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, Camp Pendleton, California.

Assigned to naval flight training in 1964, General Howell was designated a Naval Aviator in November 1965. Since that time, his flying duties have included the full gamut of billets in both tactical and training squadrons. His squadron assignments include VMFA-531, VMFA-323, VMFA-542, VT-21, VMFAT-101, VMFA-115 and VMFA-212. Two of these tours, VMFA-542 in 1967-68, and VMFA-115 in 1972-73, included flying combat missions from Chu Lai and Da Nang, Republic of Vietnam, as well as Nam Phong, Thailand.

His staff tours have included economics instructor at the U.S. Naval Academy (1973-76) and Chief of Staff, 1st MEB (1986-87), as well as various staff positions at Headquarters Marine Corps and the Pentagon in aviation related duties. Promoted to brigadier general in 1989, he served as Assistant Chief of Staff for Joint Operations/Senior U.S. Naval Officer, Headquarters Allied Forces North, NATO, Kolsas, Oslo, Norway (1989-91) and Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Aviation (1991-92). He was assigned additional duty as the Inspector General of the Marine Corps from January to April 1992. General Howell was promoted to major general in March 1992.

General Howell's command experience includes commanding rifle, weapons and mortar platoons as an infantry officer. Since becoming a Naval Aviator, he commanded Marine Fighter/Attack Squadron 212 (July 1978-July 1980); Marine Aircraft Group 24 (July 1984-July 1986); 2d Marine Aircraft Wing (May 1992-July 1994) and Deputy Commander, Marine Forces Pacific (August 1994-October 1995).

General Howell was promoted to lieutenant general and assumed command of Marine Forces Pacific on October 1, 1995.

His personal decorations include: Defense Superior Service Medal; Legion of Merit; Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V"; Air Medal with two individual and 25 strike/flight awards; and the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V". In 1980 he received the John Paul Jones Award for inspirational leadership from the Navy League of the United States.

Lieutenant General Howell is married to the former Janel Crutchfield of Decatur, Georgia. They have two children, Jefferson Davis III, a graduate of the University of Richmond and Melissa Jane, a graduate of Southwest Texas State University.

MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lieutenant General Jefferson D. Howell Jr.
Interviewer: Dr. Fred H. Allison
Date: 8 May 2006
Place: All interview sessions were conducted at General Howell's home, Village of The Hills, Austin, Texas

SESSION I

Q: This is the first session of an oral history interview with Lieutenant General Jefferson Davis Howell. This is done by Dr. Fred Allison at his home near Austin, Lake Travis outside of Austin. And today's date is the 8th of May 2006. Good morning sir!

General Howell: Hello Fred.

Q: It is good to be here. Thanks for doing this interview sir, I really appreciate it. And I think it will be a valuable addition to the Oral History Program of the Marine Corps. You were talking about your family, before we turned on the recorder, lets continue with that, you were born in 1939, August 10th I believe.

General Howell: Yes

Q: In Victoria Texas, is that right?

General Howell: That's correct.

Q: Could you give me a little background on your family?

General Howell: OK. I am a fourth generation Texan. My father's family came here via the South, moving westward from generation to generation across the South. I am not sure when they got here in the United States. But my great-grandfather brought his wife and son to Central Texas right before the start of The War Between the States. In 1859 they moved to Belmont, Texas where he had inherited a big tract of land from his brother-in-law who had died. My great-grandfather, who was a doctor, had moved from Holly Springs, Mississippi, where his parents had a large farm. He

and his wife came here, but soon after, he went back home to Mississippi because his father and his older brother died within six months of each other right at the beginning of the war. I think it was from disease. He had to go back and help his mother settle the estate. His mother and sisters were still on the home site and he helped her get everything legally settled after his father's death. Since the war had begun, he became a contract doctor with the Confederacy. He spent some time in Andersonville, at the infamous prison, as a doctor trying to help those northern prisoners who were suffering because of the terrible conditions there. Eventually he ended up back in Texas, in a little village called Belmont. It was located half-way between Seguin and Gonzales on the banks of the Guadalupe River. My grandfather was his only son and inherited all of this property, which was pretty substantial. He, in turn, spent most of his life selling off the land or giving portions to his sons and living the life of Riley. I'm told that he played the role of a 'country gentleman' to a fault and never did a full day's work. When he died in 1942, he was living on one acre of land. Everything else was gone. He did have 8 sons and 2 daughters. My father was his youngest son, and was born in 1889. That was the year that Jefferson Davis, the Confederate president, died. That is why my father was named Jefferson Davis Howell.

Q: Plus they were tremendously loyal to the South and the Confederacy and all?

General Howell: Oh they were.

Q: Did you grow up heavily influenced by that tradition then?

General Howell: Absolutely. My mother had family who fought in the Confederacy. I don't know the involvement in the War of my father's family, except for his grandfather who was a doctor with Confederacy. But he was steeped in Southern tradition and biases. He was brought-up on a farm with many workers who were former slaves. I was named Jefferson Davis Howell, Jr. after my father and was instilled with the all the myths of the 'glorious Southern Cause', and of the gallant and courageous rebels.

Q: Any your mother's family?

General Howell: My mother's family was named Hornburg. They had come from Gifhorn, Germany, where the family had been farming for several hundred years. Her grandfather came in here as a little baby with his father to Indianola, Texas. They were supposed to be part of the New

Braunfels settlement which had gone bankrupt while they were sailing over. They ended up parked on the coast of Texas, right at the beginning of the U.S.-Mexican War. The U.S. Army came in here and bought up all the wagons so a lot of the German immigrants were stuck in miserable conditions on the coast. There was much suffering from exposure and disease. Many, including my forbearers, decided to basically walk inland and find some property they could afford to buy. There were little German settlements strung out from the coast inland to Central Texas. The Hornburgs acquired a farm close to Victoria, Texas and farmed there. That is where my great-grandfather was raised. On the farm next to them lived the McDonald family, a family of Scottish immigrants. He married a McDonald daughter, got the call and became a Baptist preacher. He and my great-grandmother eventually ended up in Central Texas: Marble Falls, Fredericksburg, that area around Austin and Hill country. And that is where my mother's father was raised. He was one of four brothers and they all followed their father's footsteps. And so, my mother's father was a Baptist preacher. During her childhood they moved to different towns around that area including Marble Falls, Fredericksburg, and Johnson City. While they were in Johnson City, her youngest brother, Watt, actually went to school with Lyndon Johnson, who later became President of the United States.

Q: Oh is that right?

General Howell: Yes, and knew him well and so that is so the family tradition. My father as a young man got about two years of higher education in San Marcos, Texas, which was very unusual in Texas in those days. He became a school teacher and his first school teaching job was in Salado, Texas, which is between Austin and Waco. At Salado was the headquarters of the Robertson tract of land which had been a Mexican land grant and was still under control of the Robertson family. My father married one of the Robertson daughters and became an overseer for the man, Mr. Robertson, who owned a huge amount of property in that area. He and his wife had two daughters. Then the First World War came along. I think he was trying to get out from under the control of old man Robertson, so he volunteered to go to the war. He was commissioned in the Army, but before he got to Europe the war ended. When he returned from the army he said "I want to go back to teaching." His wife wanted to stay with her father because they were very well off and she knew what a schoolteacher's living was. So he left and they were later divorced. Several years later, my father ended up being the superintendent of schools in Taft, Texas, which is right outside of Corpus Christi. My mother had just finished school at Mary Hardin Baylor Women's College, and she was at Taft as a teacher. They met, and they courted and they ended up eloping and getting married in

Rockport, Texas. Of course the Hornburgs, being staunch Baptist, were very upset that Henrietta, my mother, married a divorced man.

Q: And quite a bit older than her too.

General Howell: Yes. He was 36 and she was 23 at the time. They moved up to a little town, Honey Grove, Texas which is close to the Oklahoma border and he was superintendent of schools there for almost ten years. They didn't have any children during that period. My mother thought she could not have children, and was very frustrated. Right about that time, right before the Great Depression hit, my father [laughter], being a very proud man, had some differences with some school board members. He had whipped some of their sons for playing hooky and subsequently had a physical confrontation with one of the board members on the courthouse steps; so he decided it was time to move on. He decided, "I'd better get a college education." He didn't have a degree, although he had been superintendent of schools in several school districts. He then attended the University of Texas, while mother stayed in Honey Grove and taught. Two years later he came home with a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree in Education, from the University of Texas. Then they moved to Victoria. This was right in the middle of the Depression, during the early 30's. It was very difficult to find work of any kind, but they both got teaching jobs in Victoria. And bingo, there must have been something in the water because they had my three sisters and me within about five and a half years. So Emily, Joy, Jane, and Jeff Howell were born in Victoria, Texas. I was the baby boy, and my nickname, as a kid, was "Boy" Howell. Everybody called me "Boy".

Q: Everybody called you Boy?

General Howell: Yes, until I was in the sixth grade. I'll never forget that occasion. It was one of those moments that stays riveted in your mind. Mrs. Gardner, my sixth grade teacher in Mitchell School, on the first day of school was calling roll and as she went down the list said "Jeff Howell?" I didn't answer. And she said "Jeff Howell? Aren't you here?" I said "Well that is not my name [laughter]; it is Boy Howell. And she said "No! It's time for you to be called Jeff." In sixth grade was the first time I was labeled as Jeff Howell. And that is when my name became Jeff, even though my family and friends all called me Boy all the way through High School. My sisters still do.

Q: When you think about your parents, what kind of influence were they on you--your father?

General Howell: Well he was a great influence on me. He was an older man. He was fifty years old when I was born. I loved my father but at the same time I had great respect for him and some fear of him, too. He was not a violent man at all, a real gentleman. But there was sternness and correctness about him that compelled me to give him great deference. He set a wonderful example in good citizenship, and promptness. He would never dream of being anywhere late, you know. Everyday, he'd grab-up the family, getting us all to different schools and everything. We'd be the first one at our school yard, an hour before school started, because Daddy wanted to be at his school early! So we learned to be prompt, and to work hard. My father always had one or two additional jobs to help make ends meet. Because of child labor laws you couldn't have a job until you were 12. Well on my 12th birthday I went and got a job at a grocery store. That was pretty standard for all the kids in our neighborhood. From that time on I always had a job some place on weekends and then in the summertime to help out. I didn't know we were poor, but we were pretty poor. With three older sisters and mom trying to help them and, you know, make dresses. I remember, almost every night, her at the sewing machine, making dresses for my sisters.

Q: What was it like being, having three older sisters?

General Howell: I don't know any different, because that is the only life I've had. But I think I was shielded from the world in a lot of ways. And I was really taught to respect women and to hold them in great esteem and to be polite and all that kind of stuff. And at the same time I think I needed to prove myself as a man because I was surrounded by all those women. And that is probably why I always sought out to go hunting with my buddies and to play sports and football. And, of course in Texas football is king! I wanted to be a football star like every young Texas boy. I wasn't big enough or fast enough but I played and tried.

Q: From junior high on up?

General Howell: Oh yes, little league, you know, and played football as a kid, I mean, that was all we knew. And baseball, wanted to be a professional baseball player, like all my buddies.

Q: Did you have a hero, a favorite baseball player?

General Howell: Stan Musial. St. Louis—in those days, there were no professional major league teams in Texas. And so, the closest major league team was the St. Louis Cardinals. So they had a very strong following in Texas. We would sit up at nights and listen on the radio, to Harry Carey, Joe Garagiola, broadcasting the St. Louis Cardinal baseball games. Stan Musial, Red Schoendienst, all those guys, well they were my heroes. So, I played high school sports but it became obvious--there has never been a horse that ain't been rode or a rider that ain't been throwed-- that I could be throwed real easy. When it came to graduation from high school, I had a try-out scholarship at a small college in San Antonio, as quarterback, and could also play for Victoria College. But I realized that my days were numbered in that regard. Also, my Uncle Watt, who lived in Austin sort of cajoled my father. He said, "JD, you went to the University of Texas. Why don't you let Jeff go? He can come and live with me." Of course he knew we didn't have any money. And so, he got me a job at the Texas Health Department up in Austin. And so, I moved up and lived with my uncle and my aunt and their two daughters my freshman year of college. I think my Uncle Watt always considered me to be a surrogate son, since he didn't have any boys. That's how I got into the University of Texas.

Q: I see. Did you go to Victoria College?

General Howell: Not full time. I attended summer school there one summer. My father taught there, he taught at Victoria College.

Q: So it is like a community college?

General Howell: Yes, it was junior college. It is a full four year college now I believe, or maybe still a two-year college, but it is called Victoria College now. It was Victoria Junior College then. That's where my father taught before he retired. He had also taught in the high school while I was a little boy. My mother was an elementary teacher and later became a school principal. She was a principal of an elementary school for years. There is a Howell Intermediate School in Victoria that is named for my parents. My sisters and I are very proud of that.

Q: What does that do to you, being in a home where both your parents are educators?

General Howell: Well, one thing, not only were you taught good citizenship but I was warned by my father that, you know, "If you go out and do something bad your parents could be fired or could

be in trouble.” So there was always that kind of thing: “You had better watch what you are doing because you could jeopardize our whole family.” It was also [I didn’t realize that in those days, this was back in the 40’s and 50’s]; it was really quite unique to have both parents who are college educated. In Texas, that was very unusual. There was an assumption that I would go to college. I was brought up understanding, there was no doubt, and so I never knew, realized the struggle that some young people have to go through just to get acceptance from their family to go to college or get encouragement. Whereas in my family it was “you will do that.” And there was always the assumption that you will serve your country, for at least a small bit of time. My father and his family had a lot of cousins that had fought in the World Wars. My father was a youngest brother, so all his brothers were much older men. I spent most of my childhood going to funerals of my uncles. So I had a lot of cousins that fought in the Second World War. And so, it was an assumption that, “you will serve someday.” So I always knew I would do that. Victoria had a couple of Air Force bases, they were Army Air Corps when I was little boy and I just fell in love with airplanes.

Q: That is where you, you think you picked up a desire to fly then?

General Howell: No doubt. Some of the memories are very vivid; we had a big tree in our backyard, an Anaukwa tree, and I don’t know how common it is or not, but it, it was a great climbing tree, but very thick. You could get your way up to the top of this thing and it had gnarled branches. And I had a favorite spot close to the top of this tree where the limbs were getting real thin where I could sit on this one and hold the controls, like I’m in an airplane. And I flew that tree all the time and I loved it when the wind blew you’d be rocking around and I was flying missions over Europe and, you know, dropping bombs on the Germans and doing all kinds of stuff. So that was sort of in me as a kid. When I got out of high school and went to college I got into Air Force ROTC, because I had a brother-in-law who’s an Air Force fighter pilot, at Foster Air Force Base [which] was in Victoria. My youngest sister married an Air Force pilot. And so, I thought that would be a good deal so I was in the Air Force ROTC.

Q: What time period are we talking about?

General Howell: This was post-Korea, late fifties. Foster Air Force Base closed soon after that. But it was reopened in Korea and then it stayed open all the way until about ‘61 or ‘62, about the time I graduated from college. So I was going to be in the Air Force and after two years you took the physical to write your contract and I failed the flight physical--eyes, eye exam. And so, they

said “Well, you can sign up to be a navigator and then stay in,” and I said “No I don’t want to be a navigator.” And so I sort of dropped out of ROTC for a year, my junior year, so, I could take the physical the next year, one more time! I had been just a little bit disappointed in the Air Force. Their leadership--they based everything, your rank and position in your flights on academics. So the eggheads were the squadron and flight commanders and some of these guys just didn’t really impress me a whole lot. Even though I was in the Arnold Air Society, the drill team (I was gung ho), but I was disappointed in some of the things I saw of the leadership. Some of the teachers we had didn’t impress me a whole lot, some of the Air Force officers. And I had a buddy—I was in a fraternity at the University of Texas, ATO (Alpha Tau Omega), and a guy a year ahead of me, I just admired incredibly, a guy named Tom Campbell, was a Marine. His father was on Guadalcanal and so he had gone through boot camp in high school and gotten in the Reserves. One day that junior year he comes in the fraternity house “Hey Howell,” he said, “You know there is a Marine Officer Selection Officer [OSO] over in the student union.” He said “you ought to go talk to him, go sign up with the Marines.” I said “OK.”

Q: [Laughter/light]

General Howell: This is a true story! So I walk (laughter) over; I didn’t know much about the Marine Corps, except what Campbell said and I go to this OSO there in the student union and he’s got a couple of guys lingering around chatting, and I go up to him and I say “Well, my name is Jeff General Howell and I want to sign up.” He said “Oh really!” He said “So what do you know about the Marine Corps?” I said “Nothing.” He said “Oh really?” He said “well have I talked to you before?” I said “No, Sir.” And he said “Oh OK, raise your right hand,” [Laughter]. First he gave me a test, you know, but then he swore me in that day for PLCs [platoon leaders class]. I was going to go to law school, and that was my intent. So I was in PLC Law.

Q: You were majoring in political science, right?

General Howell: Yes, that’s because I signed up with the Marines to go to law school. They signed me up for PLC Law program, but they required me to go to all twelve weeks that summer since I was already a junior in college. [But] when I came out of that training, that PLC training, I was so motivated when I came back and I contacted him and said “can I just get a degree and come in the Marine Corps?” And he said “Sure, we can change that.” I went to my advisor there at the University of Texas, I said “I want to get a degree as quickly as I can so I can become a Marine

officer.” So they looked at my hours and most of them were pre-law with mostly political science and liberal arts. So I just took a big slug of political science and economics my senior year and graduated and got a Reserve commission in the Marine Corps.

Q: That was 1960 right?

General Howell: 1961, I signed up in ‘60, went to PLCs that summer, and then graduated in ‘61. I got my commission and came up to Basic School in the Fall of ‘61.

Q: You had fallen in love with the Marine Corps, just the concept of being Marine, not flying?

General Howell: Yes.

Q: Had you given up on flying at that time?

General Howell: I’d given that up, and a story that goes along with that. Talking about my father, when I called home that spring when I had signed up for the Marines I called and said, “Hey Dad, I just want to let you know I did something today.” He said “What’s that?” I said “I signed up with the Marine Corps, I joined the Marines.” And I had never heard my father--he was a very proper man, I had never heard him utter a curse word in my entire life, and at the moment, you know when I said that, he said “YOU WHAT!!!” and I said “I signed up with the Marine Corps.” And he said “GOD DAMMIT TO HELL!!! [Laughter] He said, “Don’t do that!” He said “get out of that, go tell them you can’t do it.” And I said “Wwwhhhaaa, what’s wrong?” And he said “Marines get killed!” He said “you are my only son.” He said “you don’t want to do that. You wanna be in the Air Force.” [Laughter] I said “No, I want to be a Marine.” I was shocked, absolutely shocked. I had never heard him in that state of mind or that voice, he never addressed me in that voice before. Later on, he became very proud of me. But at that moment I was wondering “Oh Lord what have I done?” But I told him, I said “I want to do this.”

Q: You were his only son.

General Howell: Yes. After, you know, five daughters from a previous marriage and that marriage he finally had a boy. But! I think later on he became very proud of me, as a Marine officer.

Q: How long did he live?

General Howell: He, was 76 when I was a captain in the Marine Corps, just checking out in Phantoms. And he died in a fire. He caught a bed on fire smoking a cigar in bed. He had retired, he was losing his vision, had glaucoma, and wasn't taking his medicine. And had really, become just a very angry old man. It was sort of sad. But there in Victoria, Texas, he died from smoke inhalation.

Q: I wanted to ask one more thing about your boyhood and growing up. What church did you go to or did you belong to?

General Howell: I was a member--christened then became a member of the First Methodist Church of Victoria, Texas. You know, my mother was good Baptist preacher's daughter, but since she married a divorced man, the Baptist church would not allow him to take communion in the Baptist church back in those days. So, my mother and my father became Methodists. He had been raised as a Methodist. And I always used to tease her that my mother tried to convert the Victoria First Methodist Church into a Baptist Church.

Q: Did she?

General Howell: She was very active, taught Sunday school, and as a matter of fact, they dedicated a window in the church to my mother.

Q: But she sort of kept her Baptist leanings, there.

General Howell: Yes. She was a very devout Christian, and raised me that way. To this day, all my faith is founded on my mother's teachings and I know that all the blessings I have enjoyed, I think, are from her prayers. I know she prayed over me a lot. She was a great influence on me in that regard. In my time in the Marine Corps, we have not been regular church-goers, but usually when I would go, I would go to chapel, you know.

Q: I remember seeing you at chapel there at Kaneohe.

General Howell: Yes. When we would be deployed I'd normally go to chapel, you know, regularly. At home, in our family, we really have not been active churchgoers, frankly. But I gave myself to Christ and I still feel, like a, you know, He's got it, He's got the dot!

Q: Amen to that. How did that happen, your giving yourself to Christ?

General Howell: Talking about my experience, I fell in love with the Marine Corps, there was something there, when we got to PLCs, for instance, you know the first couple days, it was "Oh my, why am I here? I want to go home. [chuckling] I want my Momma." And I would, I was just miserable like everybody else, but, it was interesting after one week you start finding yourself, you know, gutting it and other guys aren't. You know, hacking it and other guys aren't, so it makes you feel like "Well maybe I got something other guys don't have." Then when they started interviewing people after the first two weeks and saying "you are going home," and they bring you in, one at a time in the office there, and interview you and tell you what your status is. All of the sudden, I am thinking "Oh my God, I don't want them to send me home. I want to do this." And so, I developed this eagerness and this love of the Marine Corps and wanting to do well in the Marine Corps. I found myself by the end of that summer an 'honorman' in the platoon. I had a better academic standing than most guys, even though the academics aren't that tough, for some reason because of all the stress and everything, a lot of guys have a hard time doing all that and still, you know, make a grade. I was comfortable with the Marine Corps method of training. The way they gave me instructions, the way you did everything, it seemed like I picked it up. So I just really fell in love with that. I liked being in the physical toughness, the discipline, all that. It just really appealed to me. So I just fell in love with it and wanted to do well as a Marine. And I found myself, just being very successful all throughout, and enjoyed it at the same time. Wherever I went I seemed to be successful at doing it. So, it's funny how that worked out. And I was telling you about giving myself to Christ. I got very ill [while an instructor at the Naval Academy] and that was the first time in my Marine Corps career that all of the sudden I realized that I can't really do it all on my own. You know, I am not as great as I thought I was. I am not as powerful. There is something else out there, I've got to have help. And that's when I just went to the Lord, I said "You've got it!" I will do whatever you want me to do and you will get all credit for it. And, [hands clapped] it was just like a big weight off my shoulders.

Q: Really changed your life then?

General Howell: Yes, it did, I am still as big a sinner as I was then. But at the same time, there is an assurance, that I know who's in charge, and I know where I can go for help.

Q: That was at the Naval Academy later on?

General Howell: Yes. That's when I was teaching at the Naval Academy; it is funny how that works.

Q: Let's go back, after PLCs in 1960 and you had one more year of college right?

General Howell: Yes, I came back, gung ho. I know people, my friends and everybody thought I was unbearable because I was such a gung ho Marine. And that's all I talked about. I got through that last year; the biggest trauma was my sweetheart dumped me, that I'd loved so well, I think she got tired of my Marine Corps silliness too. So it broke my heart. But I graduated and came in The Basic School in the fall of '61.

Q: Do you remember what class that was?

General Howell: I know it was D Company, and, well, we actually graduated in '62; April of '62, is when the class graduated.

Q: Do you remember any other officer's that were in the class with you?

General Howell: Yes, we had really a great group of guys. One, Don Price, retired as a colonel, a very astute guy. We had Don Meyers. He was an [U.S. Naval] Academy grad. Our group, you know some groups have a really heavy on Academy grads, others don't, ours' wasn't. We had a couple companies who had formed during the summer who were mostly Academy grads. We all got there in late September-early October, we had four or five Academy guys, but that was about it. A couple of others guys that ended up making General officer. Mike Downs was in my company. Pete Rowe was in that group. He later, he was a one-star, got killed. He got hit by a car on the Santa Ana Freeway trying to help a lady, and got side swiped. I want to say '91-'92 time frame- really a shame. I had replaced him out in Norway as the senior naval officer at the Allied Forces Northern Command. He had come back to California and about a year or two later was killed in a car wreck. But he was in that class. We also had [John P.] Brickley, but I think we were in Basic

School together; I don't think we were in the same company. He went up to brigadier General. He was a good guy, great guy. Those [are] some of the names that I remember. My roomie, a guy who I love to this day, is named Andy "Bunt" Johnson. We went overseas and back together, and then he ended up going to MCRD [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] and got out of the Marine Corps. He is a super-super guy. Bill Negron, he was helluva young Marine but he got in trouble later on-- those are some of the names that come to mind. Some other company mates where Ron Garten, Kenny Jordan, and Hugh Hyde.

Q: What kind of tactics do you remember be emphasized in those days?

General Howell: Well, it was you know, early 60's late 50's, still fighting the last war, you know, Korea kind of stuff. Some of our instructors, P.X. Kelley was an instructor there. General [James L.] Day was an instructor; these guys were all either captains or majors. We just loved them, they were great, great instructors. They were really trying to get the Marine Corps into counter-guerilla warfare.

Q: So they were starting to move that way.

General Howell: We were reading a lot books about the Brits in Malaysia, the French in Indochina, that kind of stuff. And Day actually talked the powers-that-be into setting up a special counter-guerilla training program for select lieutenants at the Basic School. He got to pull people out of all the different companies and set up a special school. I was in on that. We had two or three training sessions and then somehow, I guess somebody up the line heard about it, and Shhhwwwhippppppfffff!!!! [Sound: as if knife or machete cutting through air]. So they put us all back in our companies and said "Forget about it!" But Day tried to get that going. So there was this interest in the Marine Corps in getting into counter-guerilla warfare.

Q: Of course, Kennedy had been elected, so he sort of brought that in.

General Howell: Yes. That's probably part of it. But at Basic School we actually had a couple of classmates who were Vietnamese Marines. They were bringing them in. We also had South Koreans officers there. I remember the Vietnamese, I'll never forget as long as I live, this fellow had come in-he was a suitemate, you know, in those days, in O'Bannon Hall, we had two officers to a room with a central head. And this poor guy eating American food, he would [exhale] just

suffer. And he would go [begin laughter while talking] in the bathroom, and we'd [laughter] just have to leave, it would be so bad. He'd...

Q: You mean like diarrhea?

General Howell: Yes. I mean he just awful! It was just raunchy.

Q: Ha Ha Ha [Laughter]

General Howell: It smelled up that whole wing. And the poor guy, it wasn't his fault, he was just, you know, his metabolism and eating American food. Another funny story: the first time we went on a company hike, just a physical fitness hike, put on a pack, a light pack and helmet and rifles, we were carrying M-14s in those days. We hadn't gone a hundred meters and he pulled out of the ranks, threw his pack down, sat down on it-and said [In Vietnamese speaking accent] "No Have To Do!!!"

Q: Oh Wow! [Laughter/Chuckling]

General Howell: I'll never forget it. He sat on that and he said, "*No have to do!!!*" And one of the instructors said "What's your problem-." (I can't even remember his name). He said [In Vietnamese-like speaking] "Vietnamese officer, NO HAVE TO DO THIS! NO HAVE TO CARRY PACK! NO HAVE TO DO! I DON'T DO!" You know, it was so funny, and they finally convinced him he had to do it.

Q: He thought he was nobility, or if you were an officer....

General Howell: Yes, they always had people carrying their stuff for them. But he was good guy. He ended up making it through OK.

Q: Were you starting to get some indication of going to war? In Vietnam, was that happening?

General Howell: No. No. This was '61-'62. We were looking more in Indonesia, Malaysia, and those places were the places where we thought we might, Philippines maybe, do counter-guerrilla in those places. In my mind, [I] didn't realize where we might end up.

Q: Any thoughts at this time about flying?

General Howell: You know, they came around and said “Hey, we’ll give a flight physical to anybody who wants [to go to flight school], would you like to try out?” And I took the flight physical at The Basic School, I thought I “might as well.” But I had been out drinking with a bunch of guys the night before and just got plastered. So I didn’t do well on the flight physical [laughter] there. I didn’t realize--and it shows you how stupid I was-- I didn’t realize how drinking is *not good for you* to take a flight physical. But I just accepted it and ended up getting a regular commission. I was in the top ten percent of my class.

Q: Ok, you got a regular commission there.

General Howell: They offered us a regular commission and I accepted that, and became an 03, got to be an infantry officer.

Q: Looking back on it, what’s the significance of TBS for you? You go on to be an aviator, is it relevant for aviators?

General Howell: I am convinced that the Marine Corps by putting everyone on equal footing and stamping a common culture or a common outlook on all of its officers and, in boot camp and in OCS, gives you a better understanding of what the Marine Corps all about. When you come out of that, it doesn’t matter what you do, you really know what’s important to the Marine Corps. So every decision you make, every decision that’s made that affects you, you can accept it more if it jives with what is the common cause of the Marine Corps. And that’s that young Marine taking the hill. I think it’s really important that the Marine Corps instills that in their young officers, no matter what they’re going to do. No matter what you’re doing is to ensure that that young Marine can take that objective. I think that’s vital and I think that’s one of the reasons the Marine Corps is so successful in everything it does, is they [have] that commonality in it’s culture of what’s really important to Marines. So TBS, you know, you have fads at TBS, what they train you-how they do it, but really I think the General emphasis, the core meaning of it is just to get everybody thinking the same way and understanding when something is said later on, from one Marine to another, you understand what the guy means because you all went to TBS; whereas in other places they don’t have that. One thing that came out of TBS for me that had a great influence on me-- because we graduated in April, they grabbed about 40 2nd lieutenants out of our class and held us at Quantico to

be PLC platoon leaders that summer. They actually assigned a bunch of us to be assistant platoon leaders for an OCS command, you know, at T&T (training and test regiment) there, right by the railroad tracks at Quantico. And I was assistant platoon leader to a guy named Burt Spiker, and went over the hill trail a bunch of times with them. Then that summer we went out to Upshur. I was a platoon leader at two Junior PLC sessions that summer. They brought a bunch of NCOs up out of Parris Island to be platoon sergeants and had a group of really outstanding platoon sergeants there. So-you-get around some just really 'A.J Squared Away,' Marine NCOs you really admire. The NCO I had as a PLC just inspired me. To this day he was probably one of the main reasons why I was so excited about being a Marine.

Q: I guess that experience really helped when you got your first platoon.

General Howell: I saw some really outstanding NCO leadership, but I think in some ways it affected me negatively because at the end of that summer, this is summer of '62 I was assigned out to Camp Pendleton to be a platoon leader, in the 1st Marine Division. I took a lot of that [exhale] 'in your face, tough on the candidates, treat your candidates like dirt' attitude. I took some of that attitude to my platoon as a platoon leader, and those young Marines suffered for that. That was not necessary. It took me a while to get out of that attitude.

Q: When you had two different groups there?

General Howell: Yes. You got guys that are in there, you know, they have no choice. Whereas PLCs can go home if they want to. Just say "I want out!" It is one-of-the-things you're looking for, you know, seeing if they can handle it, you're sort of hoping for DORs [Drop On Request]. And we had a bunch of them. In a regular FMF platoon, that poor guy, he's enlisted and he's there, he's stuck. Here I am acting like a tough, in your face, you know "what's your problem?" this kind of thing; not very understanding. I had a lot of that coming out of that summer and to this day I regret that. It took me almost a year, a year half to mature and realize that I shouldn't be that way.

Q: Gung Ho second lieutenants can be dangerous.

General Howell.: Yes. Gung ho with negative leadership, very negative in-your-face leadership. I wanted to be John Wayne.

Q: What sort of operations, infantry training, did you have going in those days at Camp Pendleton?

General Howell: In those days, they were just starting, what they called “trans-placement battalions.” Where a battalion would form up, lock on, and then go over as a battalion for one year over to Okinawa and then come back. And we went on ships in those days, on Army transports. You didn’t go in airplanes over to Okinawa. One thing that occurred, that was very significant, this was late summer early, fall of ’62 when I am home on leave on my way to California to be a real platoon leader, is when the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred. While I’m home on leave, the whole 1st Marine Division ships out, to go to war. And they went through the Panama Canal, and were getting ready to invade Cuba. So when I arrived out there, there wasn’t anybody there. We checked in at Camp Las Pulgas in the 7th Marines; we were 2d Battalion, Seventh Marines. And it was like a ghost town. And yet, our poor battalion commander, a guy named Timothy Kearns, was directed, this was in the October of ’62, “You will have a battalion ready for combat to go overseas in January of next year-- go get ‘em.” And there was nobody there. And I mean the, the Division had taken almost everything with them, all the equipment, everything, I mean, you know how the Marines are. When we go to war, they get everything. And so, they basically cleaned out the brigs, shut down the rifle range--brought the old fat rifle range sergeants-- been there all their lives--brought them in. And that’s the way we formed that battalion initially. My platoon, in those days, I think the T/O [Table of Organization] for a rifle platoon was 44 or 45, something like that. We had 22 Marines, and half of them, *half of my Marines* about 10 or 11 of them, were all privates and they’d all already been overseas and back. They had Page 12s that read like a novel. These guys did not want to go back.

Q: And these are the guys that you’re in their face on?

General Howell: Yes, I mean, it was war.

Q: So you had a lot of discipline issues there?

General Howell: Big time. I don’t think they could believe me. They couldn’t believe that they’d run into this guy, this gung-ho idiot who wouldn’t give them any slack. I didn’t give them any slack at all. I wanted them to be just like candidates: ‘A.J. Squared-Away.’ And they could care less, and it was just a struggle! I had a platoon sergeant, he was out of shape. He’d been on the rifle range for five years. At Camp Las Pulgas, they had a big old steep hill. They used to call it

“Old Sheep Shit Mountain.” You went over that hill everyday to go to the training area. And that sergeant, we all had to stand at the top and wait for him, to catch up with the platoon. It was awful! [voice cracks]—my NCO leadership!

Q: So he wasn't giving you much positive feedback on your leadership.

General Howell: No, I think he was just dazzled by me too. He could not believe he got his hands on this, gung-ho, go-get-em.... We were trying to train, didn't have any blank ammunition. Basically platoon leaders, it was up to you to form your own training plan, give your own lessons; and no school support; they'd all gone to war. That battalion really suffered and I wasn't the only guy, you know. That was the make up of this whole battalion. So we were all undermanned, under-equipped, didn't have live ammunition. I mean it was rough. So, about two months later, say late November, early December, the Division comes back, and then they flesh us out. And I ended up getting a wonderful man as my platoon sergeant, SSgt Verault. These guys had all been aboard the ships now for two and a half months. They wanted to go home on leave and yet we were locking on to go to WestPac and wouldn't give anybody any leave; we had to get ready to go. So the morale was just awful, and it was a tough, tough time. But we put it together and trained hard. The battalion did give our Marines a week off to go home for Christmas and what have you. After New Year's came around about half my bandits didn't come back from leave. They were over the hill. We were supposed to ship out, I think, on the 17th of January, so they were just going to stay home until we left, just go back to the brig, probably where they'd come from, anyway. It was really funny; Headquarters delayed our movement by two and a half weeks or something. And after the 17th these guys come [slight laugh] strutting in thinking the battalion's gone.

So they come in, they get, special court-martials and all that. I had at least four guys in my platoon alone that spent the whole time going over to Okinawa in the brig, on bread and water, down in the bowels of the USS *General Mann*. We got into a typhoon. That ship was just banging and shuttering and rolling. I'd go down and visit those poor guys. I mean they were as green as that skirt on that thing right there [pointing at a table]. I mean they were just sick and scared. They were in the brig in the bowel of the ship and it was just banging and hammering. Heck we were up topside and we thought we were going to break in two and those poor guys down in that brig locked up in there. It made believers out of some of them. When we got off that boat some of those guys became pretty good Marines.

Q: I guess you were really learning about leadership. Did you have role models coming along there?

General Howell: I did. My company commander's name was Wayne Thompson. Very handsome athletic guy, he really impressed me initially. Early on, though, I saw some weaknesses that didn't impress me. But, next door Kilo Company had a guy named Kartchner, Captain Kartchner. Its funny how you sort of see people who just really impress you. Lima Company had a guy named Al Rudy, a big old New York guy, who had great leadership skills. So as a young lieutenant you see yourself saying, you know, "I like his act. I like the way he does things." And you start trying to model yourself after those guys. It takes a while because you're so wrapped up in what you're doing, but then particularly when you get on a ship and going overseas and then you get over to Okinawa, spend a year together. And we shipped out, that was a wonderful cruise. Because our battalion actually went right away to a six weeks deployment to Mount Fuji, came back for about three weeks go for a two week exercise in Korea, walked sixty-five miles [laughing], in two weeks in Korea. Come back and then became the float battalion for the MEF out there for three months, went into the Philippines, went down to Vietnam-didn't go in-but floated around, that was when President [Ngo] Diem was assassinated, ended up in two exercises in Taiwan, got to see Taiwan and do exercises there. Did a lot of jungle training in the Philippines. Actually I spent six weeks--solid! up in the Northern Training Area at Okinawa. I got to be a guerilla leader in a guerilla band. They'd bring in units every week and come after us. That was just a great experience so, that year was packed full of travel and activities and I learned a heck of a lot and a very enjoyable year to be deployed. And the battalion got better and better and better and as you get to know people and see how they act that is when I started realizing that the leaders who I really respected, I saw them getting very positive results; they weren't jerks, you know, they weren't assholes. They weren't so hard on their Marines, they reasoned with their Marines, they helped their Marines, they tried to show their Marines and I realized that, you know, "Hey Howell you're on the wrong track here you need to be more understanding." Just like Lejeune said "more like a teacher to a student" instead of, you know [hands clap loudly together], drill instructor, hard ass. And so, by the time that year was over I had been a platoon leader for six months, rifle platoon leader and then was the weapons platoon leader for the, for the company. This was the Third Battalion, Third Marines, 3/3. Our battalion commander turned over 2/7 flag to the battalion commander coming out. So we became Third Battalion, Third Marines.

Q: Which is a legendary battalion.

General Howell: Absolutely. They had great Second World War combat history and everything. You know I told you, about forty of us [were] held back to be platoon leaders in PLCs and OCS for that summer. Well, a significant number of that group of lieutenants, all the infantry guys, ended up being in the same battalion there in Pendleton and then going overseas together. We all ended up in the same battalion together at Pendleton “locking on.” In those days they called “locking on” or “freezing” to get ready to go for deployment. And then we went overseas together for a year. So, so that group of lieutenants, we really got close, got tight. That’s why I told you Andy Johnson, who had been my buddy all the way in Basic School. We ended up being roommates in Okinawa. We got to be very close friends. The guys I remember most were the guys who went through all that that stuff together--Don Price, Bill Negron, and Ed Massman. There’s a guy who lives right across the lake over here in Largo Vista, who was our battalion air liaison officer, Bill Orr. He was a Marine attack pilot. He sort of saw something in me, he started asking me while we were over there--the battalions were “fleshed out” when they went to WestPac, it was a good size. So we actually we also had a forward air controller too, his assistant, Dave Hallet. And when you got to know those guys better, I just liked their act, their attitude, the aviators. And for some reason they liked me too. And Orr started trying to convince me--“you know you ought to think about going to flight training.” And I told him “Well, I failed the flight physical.” He said “Well, Ok.” But then about halfway through that deployment a message came out from the Marine Corps. They really put out a call that any regular officers who would like to apply for flight training. The Marine Corps was really looking for aviators. I think things were starting to brew. We had helicopters deployed to Vietnam by that time.

Q: Shufly Operation.

General Howell: Yes, doing short deployments. They allowed several officers from the battalion to go over for 30 days OJT [On the Job Training], into country, and spend time with advisors over there. And of course, I volunteered for that. I was not selected, and it just really broke my heart. But several of the guys got to go over there and then come back and we listened to all their experiences with great excitement.

Q: But you stayed on the ship most of the time?

General Howell: Well we, moved from one place to another. We were based at Camp Schwab. That was our home base; that's where the Third Marine Regiment was, our colors were. When we would deploy to Japan we'd get on a ship and go to Japan. Land, go up to Fuji and then we trained at Fuji for almost six weeks, come back out on the ship. Came back, did a landing every time we went anywhere we landed and it was, and it was always over the side on the nets, you know into a Mike or Peter boat. We didn't have any "Gators" all these were the old Higgins boats, landing craft. So you were coming down that net, in choppy seas and trying to time when you could step and not drop ten feet, and hope you didn't get trapped between the boat and the ship. That was quite a challenge, quite exciting. Just like the movies in the Second World War. So, we did those landings, we landed everywhere we went. The only time I ever got helicopter envelopment was in the exercise in Taiwan. Our company actually went on helicopters into that exercise.

Q: There was no air combat element per se.

General Howell: It was called the Special Landing Force, SLF. We had a helicopter carrier, when we first got over there it was the *Princeton*, was a converted CV. It had H-34's on it, we used to call them, HUS's, but they were H-34's. While we were there the USS *Iwo Jima* made its maiden voyage to WestPac. We got to go aboard the *Iwo Jima* and so we were the first battalion deployed aboard *Iwo Jima* and we had a helicopter element. It was air conditioned and all that. I mean it was nice, living the life of Riley, this was NICE! It wasn't big enough to carry the whole thing. Wherever it went you'd have a couple of companies on a APA [Amphibious Transport, Attack] along that carried all the trash: artillery and all that stuff, on it. And normally you'd have a little mini-destroyer escorting us wherever we went. So that was sort of the, the MAGTF kind of design.

Q: Who was your battalion commander and his staff?

General Howell: Timothy J. Kearns, he was an artilleryman, had a rifle battalion. His executive officer, I want to say was Boland, or Boles, and I remember a Major Chen was the 'three'. He was a very astute guy, we respected him, very much--big tall handsome guy.

Q: You were talking to the aviators earlier, the ALO [air liaison officer], and the FAC [forward air controller], what became of that?

General Howell: Well this message from Headquarters Marine Corps came out requesting regular officers to apply for aviation training. Capt. Orr stuck that under my nose. He said, "Jeff, you ought to look into this." And I told him, "Well let's try again." And, by this time we were deployed down to Subic. And he said, "So you know there's an aviation dispensary over at Cubi Point." He said "I'll set up an appointment for you, to go over there and take the physical." So I went over there and lo and behold passed the eye test for the first time. I think being onboard a ship all that time and staying away from booze and what have you, I ended up doing well. But, here's the kicker, I get to the hearing test and I failed the hearing test [chuckling]! And this young corpsman looked at me and he said "Gee, I hate to tell you this lieutenant," (I'm a 1st lieutenant by now), "I just can't pass you, I'm sorry." He was really a nice guy. I said "Well, Ok." So, and it's funny how fate runs but it's a true story, because I'm walking out of the dispensary, with my head down and just by coincidence Capt Orr is walking out of the BOQ [bachelors' officers' quarters]. In those days, remember the old Cubi Point BOQ; the dispensary was just right down the hill from it. He comes up and says "Hey, Howell! How'd it go!?" I said, "I failed the hearing test." He said "WHAT!" I said "Yeah, I failed the hearing test." He said "Well Heck!" aviators can't hear anything." He said "That doesn't matter!" So I said, "Yeah, but I failed." He said "Hey! Here's what you do:" He said, "go right now to sick bay and tell them you were surfing yesterday and you got sand in your ears and you want to have them washed out. And have them wash your ears out. And go right back to that hearing test guy and say that you had your ears washed out and you want to try again. So, here's what you do, "you take that button and do you hear things right away?" I said "Yeah." He said "Just time it! Its five seconds down, one second off, four seconds down, two seconds off, three seconds down, one second off, and then go through that same, just do that-do that, even when you quit hearing it." He said "don't worry about it." And so, I did. I said, "Hey I had my ears washed out I'd like to try it again." He said "Well OK." I went in that booth and after the low tones [begin laughing] I am just sitting there. When he opened the door I'm just squeezing that thing, when he opens the door [End laughing]. And I come out. And he said, "that's amazing, Sir! You've got perfect hearing [Hands clap loudly together]." [Laughing]

Q: The power of gouge.

General Howell: Yes.

Q: So you passed the flight physical, what happened next?

General Howell: Yes. So then, so I send in my application. And we go about our business. It's another one of these great moments in sports-- the last day on Okinawa, we've all got our sea bags packed and we're all out in formation; got a battalion formation along the streets of Schwab. I'm down at the barracks-- I'm down with my platoon, standing there waiting for the buses; got all our Marines. I had some Marines, I had a couple Marines in that platoon, they were good kids, but unless I made sure an NCO got them in the shower every night, they'd forget to take a shower. I mean we had some guys that weren't the sharpest tacks in the box. I'm looking after them. Making sure they have their rifles. Making sure they got all their gear, which we had to do, everywhere we went it was part of what a lieutenant does. We're standing there and running up the hill, (barracks were on a hill) and, an officer named Sonny James, he was the company XO, later on went to flight training himself, I see him. He's running up the street with this piece of paper. "Hey Howell! Howell! Come here Howell! [Impersonation done with ascending shouting loudness to illustrate the distance] And I, I said "Yes. I'm right here, what's up Sonny?" He said, "You just got orders to flight training. You've been accepted at flight training!" Of course, some of the guys went "YEA!" And other people said "Aww, lieutenant you don't want to be an aviator."

Q: So you had put in for it?

General Howell: Yes, I had applied, and had not heard anything. This was about, I don't know, two or three months later. This comes the last day on Okinawa. But we go back, I'm assigned while we're transporting back, we're now on the USS *Billy Mitchell*, an old Army troop transport. In those days when you go home, you don't go directly home. We'd go from Okinawa up to Sasebo and they'd bring on families, drop off families, went over to Taiwan, let it drop on families, and then you end up, go through Hawaii, never spend the night in Hawaii, they'd just give you one day, and then finally to California. I'm now the 81 mortars platoon commander, and, go home, get a couple weeks leave. I pick up my Corvette at home in Victoria. My mother had been driving my car while—

Q: You had a Corvette?

General Howell: Yes, I bought a Corvette right out of college. I was stupid, bought a Corvette, actually my last summer while I was taking classes, and I was broke. That's another story. My whole time as a 2^d lieutenant I was dead broke, because I was stupid. I bought that new car, brand

new Corvette, and I'm having to pay for uniforms, you know, Reserve officer, so when we're at Basic School, I am just, I mean destitute. We'd go to parties and you'd meet a nice gal and say "Hey would you like to go out?" And they'd say "Yes." And I'd say "Well, I'd love to take you out." I'd say "I can provide the car if you don't mind buying the gas and movie tickets?"

[Laughing during end of sentence]

I was broke, you had to make deals. My financial situation finally got better when I got overseas and made first lieutenant--my deal with my mother was that she got to keep my car but she had to make the car payments for me.

Q: Your mother's driving a Corvette.

General Howell: My mother was dear to me. And so she's driving that little Corvette to school and back. But anyway we came back and I had an 81 platoon and I had not gotten orders to flight training; I'd been accepted; orders to follow. I was there for about a month--when we came back we traded flags; we're now Second Battalion Fifth Marines (2/5). We came back; we're in Camp Santa Margarita, with the 5th Marines. I got to go out to a big shootout in Twenty-nine Palms; it was the first time for me to go to Twenty-nine Palms. Didn't realize how bad the sun was. I got chapped lips so bad that my lips bled for a month after that. I couldn't get a girl to kiss me for a month after that. So finally, I think about two months later I finally get orders to go to flight training. So I leave Pendleton. Last weekend there, they say "Howell, you got one weekend left?" "Yes." "OK, you got regimental duties." So, I'm the regimental duty officer. You know, I'm a bachelor and they know I'm leaving so I get the good deal. And of course, I'm in headquarters services company now with 81's. I had a sentry malingerer shoot himself in the foot with his rifle, one of my guards. It's reported to me and we get him to the dispensary, get him replaced, and assign an investigation. That's on a Sunday. Next day report in and I say, "This is my last day." The company commander says "No, it isn't. We're going to put you on a, on a legal hold because you're an interested party in this thing. This guy we found, he did not go to guard school, and I think you are responsible for that; you might be responsible for him shooting himself in the foot. So your whole career might have changed here, lieutenant." Oh my God--well, we get out the regulations, and lo and behold written there in black and white is, 'the guard sergeant, the sergeant of the guard will be responsible for holding guard school and making sure all the sentries attend.' It doesn't say anything about the duty officer. So I got out of it, it was just written in the regs. You really had to be careful at everything you did and make sure you follow regulations, and I just knew if I was responsible for that I would have made sure that everybody was there; I just knew

that. But you, it hits you; you say “Oh my God, I’m screwed!” The next day he [my CO] reluctantly said “Howell, you’re off the hook, Go.” So I went off, go to Pensacola, *and my whole life changes when I go to Pensacola.*

Q: Wasn’t there an incident while you were in Okinawa about a helicopter crash?

General Howell: Oh, yes, you reminded me of something else that might be of interest. Another reason why, Orr talked me into going to flight training—aboard *Iwo Jima* we deployed down there in the Philippines, and I buddied-up with a bunch of helicopter pilots. I found out that when we would go on liberty together the aviators had a lot more fun than the grunts.

Q: Is that right? It became apparent to you.

General Howell: I enjoyed hanging out with these guys. So I started asking them “Hey can I come fly with you when you all go out, not on troop movements, but just to get in your flight time.” And so, I started going and getting on these helicopters with them and flying around with them when they’re getting their night time and stuff, stuff like that. I’ll never forget asking a guy, “Is there anyway I could get one of these leather flight jackets? Man, I would love to have one of these.” And he looked me right in the eyes, he said “Yeah. *Go to flight training*, that’s the way you get it. That’s the only way you get it.” So that was another motivator for me, go to flight training: get a flight jacket.

But about the crash, right before we came home, it was either, very late in ’63 or early in ’64 we’re back at Camp Schwab and I can remember it being a bright sunny day. For some reason, I’m up at the company office, checking on something or doing something and I hear the whop, whop, whop [sound of helicopter blades] and it’s/its an HOK coming into land. There was a little LZ [landing zone] up there close to battalion headquarters. I hear this sort of [strongly exhaling] not so much a bang, but just sort of like when one car hits another car, smacks it, it’s not awful but you know something happened it wasn’t right. Just three seconds later somebody runs in. They say, “Call the fire trucks, there’s been a mishap!” And so, I run out, the LZ’s only about two hooch’s away, and I go running around these hooch’s, and there is an HOK, sitting there, gears collapsed. It’s just sort of bent, its sort of steaming, smoke’s coming up out of it. No flames at this time. The pilots getting out, and the guy in the right seat though, he can’t get his door open, and he looks like he’s dizzy. So we, a couple of us, go and just grab this hatch and manage to wrench it out. And about this time the fire’s starting, and we get him out, drag him out of there. Then all the

sudden the fire, the fire trucks come up, but I tell you, that thing went so quick [snaps fingers] I could not believe that, when it started burning, it just: Whoopfff [sound of rapidly engulfing flames], it was just white hot. I remember that it was, it was like a magnesium fire. You know if you've ever seen magnesium burn.

A lot of those early helicopters had a lot of magnesium in them, because it is so light. It's such a light material. Also you get salt water on it, it just you know [fingers snap], salt water will eat a hole right through it.

Q: How soon did the fire break out after you got the guy out?

General Howell: Very quickly. Nothing heroic, we got him out and, before any fire, but it was just sort of simmering, smoking, and then all the sudden it just, once the fire started it, I mean it, it seemed like it was just three minutes later the thing's gone, it disappeared. So we just stood there like idiots watching it.

Q: Anybody put you in for a Navy-Marine Corps Medal or anything like that?

General Howell: Oh no, no, no, no! As a matter-of-fact I assisted a guy. I was not the lead on that at all. I just happened to be there and helped them do it. There's a couple of other guys that stuck their noses in ahead of me. If anybody deserved it, they did.

Q: OK, anything else on your experiences as an infantry officer?

General Howell: A couple things that come to mind. One of the best things we did at Basic School, they had, an attack on a where the lieutenants all got to have live ammunition and do fire and maneuver. We actually had live ammunition and did fire and maneuver; we did it by fire teams. And we went from position to position. You had the instructors, the guys with the white on their helmets with you at all times, making sure we were safe. It was very carefully orchestrated, but we actually took an objective using live ammunition. And I thought that was cool. And another aspect of it, you know this is Day and P.X. Kelley and these guys, they got that going. And really created a lot of excitement and, and they also had us fix bayonets when we did it. So we took this fire maneuver exercise and we all got to go through it. I thought it was the cat's meow, it was great, *"this is what it's all about."* So were [voice cracks from laughing] in Japan, at Fuji. They gave us a couple of weeks, its funny, you would do things: little, little bigger, little bigger, little bigger, so,

you would have fire team tactics for a week. You would have squad tactics for a week, platoon tactics for a week, company maneuver tactics and then, the battalion exercise at the end. That's the way all of our training was, no matter where we went. And then you start over again with the fire teams. So when we got to the squad tactics they actually took us to a live fire range. Where we could take our squads and line them up and shoot at targets, on a range. And so I got the idea, since I was in charge, and it was my platoon, and it was my morning to have this range, I [thought], "Why don't we do fire and maneuver?" [Laughter] And so, I had my guys, I had two squads of them, while this one's firing, these guys would maneuver up to a certain position and they fired. I had it blocked out and all that, and I had them, I said "Fix bayonets!" So I had them fix bayonets [laughing].

Q: [laughing] With live ammunition?

General Howell: Yes! Live ammunition; we're maneuvering up, firing, and going, and charging up. And the Marines are really getting into it; they're loving it. But we got halfway through this and my company commander comes driving up there [laughing] in his jeep [laughing] and sees this, and sees what's going on and the company gunny run up there, "LIEUTENANT! CEASE FIRE! CEASE FIRE! Stop that [laughing hysterically]!" So we stop and, and I tell you the company commander almost had a baby, he was so upset, with me.

Q: It was totally unsafe? Is that what he was upset about?

General Howell: Yes. That's what he thought. I said, "We did this at Basic School. Why can't I do it with these guys?" He said "Nooo! You can't do that! You stay behind this line. Everybody fires behind. You do not do fire and maneuver, and all that." So I tried. I tried, I thought it was the coolest it was one of the coolest things I'd ever done. And later, on sort of the proof of the pudding, on some people who you find out their 'true colors'. Our last big exercise at Fuji was a big battalion maneuver to an objective. And it was part of some operational readiness exercise, for our battalion, we were part of a bigger scheme. We had been up all night, got snowed on that night and it was the last day of trudging. At Fuji when you face the mountain it's uphill, no matter where you are, if you're looking at the mountain you're walking up hill. The objectives were all toward the mountain. Well, it snowed, got about six-seven inches of snow and so the whole day we're all maneuvering forward and this is the big climax of the battalion exercise. It's wet, you know. And we didn't have any snow shoes or anything. It was just muddy, wet, slogging through snow and,

and moving uphill. Well, the company XO, Sonny James, had a bad back or something, so he was back in the camp. So I was the acting company executive officer. So I'm back in the back with the trash, you know, herding the company office and all the gear forward on these mechanical mules; trying to keep up. Of course all of our old walkie-talkies, PRC-6's I guess they were called, were just dead; they weren't working. And, halfway through this maneuver, halfway into the morning, we'd been up since before sunrise, and we'd been moving, slogging through mud and snow and crap. This poor kid comes all the way down, "Company XO!, Company XO forward! Company XO forward!" And I come up "What's up?" And he said, "The company commander's been killed. You've gotta go take over the company!" So here we go. And I'm, you know, with pack and all that, double timing through snow and shit and through Marines, a thousand Marines who are just sort of gravitating to these trails where you can get through because we got snow up to your knees. And slogging, slogging, finally takes, seem likes takes me forever, probably not more than fifteen minutes to run up to the front of the company; I damn near had a heart attack. I finally get up to the front and I'm briefed by the judge there, and they said, "Your company commander has suffered a fatality. You're now the company commander. Here's the enemy situation, you're now in charge." [Laughing]

So they, the enemy are up on a ridgeline, up ahead of us about two clicks away. They have the flag up there, the bad guys! And we're a company in the attack, and so I get my platoon commanders, these are my buddies, I get them together. This is our chance, ever since Basic School, you know, we're going to do something [hands clap loudly together]. So, Don Price, my buddy who's got the second platoon, I said, "OK!" [excitedly] Don, move up to that forest and envelope on the right side. And I'll lay down a base of fire here, we'll call in mortars." You know, we're going to take these bastards and kill 'em [sic]." Then so, he said, "We got it!" They had two pieces of smoke left, you know he took one of the last smoke grenades, and I said, "Throw that grenade and we'll shift fire to the left as you come across." So, off he goes and we got our people set up and we're going,- you know, there are no blanks, we'd run out two days prior,- so everybody's going "bang, bang, bang." I'm calling to the back, trying to get hold of the battalion commander with a PRC-10 which the company commander had, and that thing's not working. I finally get hold of somebody to tell them that we are engaged with the enemy, we have them ahead of us, I am attacking [and] request mortar fire on that objective and we'll tell you when to cease fire' and it's: "over and out, under, do you hear? Do you read? I don't understand! Say again!" you know, "Who is this?" and all this shit. I never know if for sure they get the message, except I tell them "I am attacking! [sarcastic tone]." Finally--it seemed like forever-- we're sitting there going "bang, bang, bang," of course the guys up on the hill can't hear us, but we're doing it. The judges

see what we're trying to do. Hear "Ppppppp [sound of smoke grenade going off]", here goes smoke, I said "OK, shift fire!" I see Price and those guys, they've been going uphill all this time through woods to get there, and these guys are exhausted! They try to come across; we can just barely see them and then, they sort of disappear over the ridgeline [laughing]; nothing. So, "Cease fire!" About twenty minutes later here comes this lone Marine, you know jogging down the hill, you know trudging down the hill. He's got a message, and comes down, and "Where's the company commander?" "Here!" I open it up and it says "You have just attacked a regiment with a platoon, you have been wiped out!" And "Oh, by the way our fires are wiping you out as we speak. Sorry about that [sarcastic tone]." So I handed it over to the judge and said, "Oh well, I tried. I didn't know there was a regiment over there." An hour later the exercise is over and so be it. And, here's [laughing] the, it was my moment of glory and I blew it.

Q: [Laughter]

General Howell: Later on, and by the way, Brickley was the judge, he was in 1st Battalion, 3d Marines and was up there as a judge. He was a really squared away guy. We're finally back at Mt. Fuji base camp and the exercise is over. I think we failed it. But I'm not sure. We never got word at our level, how we did. That was another problem of that battalion, lack of communications. We're in this little geedunk drinking our first beer in a week. And they're playing Loretta Lynn, the only record they've got, they keep playing her song over and over again. And we're sitting there and Brickley walked in there and he said, "Hey Howell, can I talk to you a minute?" I said, "Sure." So we walked over out of the crowd. And he said, "Hey listen. Don't take it hard, you tried. But I just wanted to let you know, that you know why your company commander got killed?" I said, "No." And he said, "He came up to me and asked to be killed. He said he was tired and he wanted to be killed-- I just thought you ought to know that."

Q: Interesting.

General Howell: I could never think the same of that guy again. He was sort of weak willed, a nice fellow and real athletic. I mean, he was a real jock. But something here wasn't strong [pointing to heart], I had sensed that, but that was, you know, it all came to closure on that.

Q: It's sort of another leadership lesson, what do they call that--morale courage, physical courage, you have mental courage, and that's part of it.

General Howell: Yes, so that sort of destroyed [it], I didn't tell anybody else, because I didn't want anybody to know. He was the company commander, it would have--I never could look him as the same again after that.

Dr. Allison and General Howell have been looking at a photo album which illicit the following remarks from General Howell:

“Sir, 1st Lieutenant Howell reports, 2^d platoon is prepared for inspection, Sir!” That was it. All he said, “That’s swell lieutenant.” But I was really proud of these Marines. They really were sharp that day. Our battalion had to provide the honor guard. Because we’re getting ready to leave, this was in January of ’64. We were getting ready to get aboard ship and go. Out of our company we formed one platoon of our best. So, all the best Marines in the different platoons got to be in that one platoon. I had one platoon of really fine young Marines and we drilled them and drilled them and I tell you, I was really proud of them. They were sharp that day. So that was, that was a proud moment for me, to be able to be there for the Commandant. [There] wasn’t much else going on in those days.

Q: Ok, we’re going back, now you’re heading to flight school. You get back to California and you head to Pensacola, did you drive your Corvette out?

General Howell: Yes. The first time coming through the gate in Pensacola-- in those days they had Navy sailors on the gates. Coming through he gives me one of these [re-enacts the sailor’s improper salute] and I stop my Corvette, get out and said, “Sailor! If you’re going to salute me you have to do it correctly.” And so I give him instruction, you know how to salute correctly. And I said, “Thank you.” Of course backing up traffic [laughing].

Q: [Laughing]

General Howell: Next time I come through the gate again—“Sailor! OK we’re going to practice this again...” and then; third day, I’m coming through the gate the sailor sees me coming; he goes and hides in the guard shack [laughing]. There’s nobody at the guard shack [laughing]. I just drive through [laughing].

Q: [Laughing]

General Howell: He just went running.

[Laughing] Everybody heard about me. “When this Corvette comes up, just get out of the way; this lieutenant’s going to”

Q: Did you check into MATSG [Marine Air Training Support Group], did it even exist then?

General Howell: They did have a MATSG at that time. I was a first lieutenant, I thought I was a big dog. All the bachelors lived in these white elephants, behind the big brick, red brick building, its still there, with the columns. I thought that’s probably where we’d be staying. I realized that’s where senior officers and instructors stayed. Behind it, they’re all gone now, they had these old wooden World War II pre-fab, you know, wooden ‘white elephant’ barracks type. They had individual rooms in them. And that’s where, that’s where we were assigned for the training.

Q: Did they have air conditioning in them?

General Howell: No way, tiny little room, musty, hotter than Hades.

Q: What time of the year did you arrive there?

General Howell: I want to say, June, May or June, of ’64.

Q: I guess this is your first time dealing with the Navy, being in a Navy world, except aboard ship, was this a different Navy than one you had seen?

General Howell: This is my second time, and really it was an incredible revelation, because my whole experience with the Navy had been the ‘Gator Navy’ on these, on these amphibis, and it was awful. I mean, I had a very bad feeling, attitude toward the sailors and the Navy because of the people I had been dealing and working with on amphibis, the way they treated Marines. Now I get to Pensacola, and I tell you, they were squared away. I’ll never forget the first chief petty officer I ran into, asked for directions to someplace and man he stood straight, squared-away, said, “Well, lieutenant...go right over there and they’ll take care of you. Right over there, sir, and let me know if I can help you.” I found out that Navy aviation was just five times, heads above, the ‘Gator

Navy.’ These guys really had their shit together. I was very impressed with the aviation side of the Navy.

Q: The amphibious part of the Navy is considered the second class citizens of the Navy.

General Howell: Yes. In those days [Naval Aviators] were the elite. In my lifetime, [they have] been subverted by the nukes [nuclear submarines]. Nukes took over the Navy over the last twenty or thirty years. In those days, carrier Navy was the Navy.

Q: It was dominant.

General Howell: That was it. Yes. They were the power.

Q: They still have a lot of clout.

General Howell: Oh yes, they do.

Q: But you liked the feeling of being around the aviation in Pensacola.

General Howell: Just fell in love with it. But, the biggest challenge was always the flight physical. [I] stood up that first flight physical with about a dozen other guys, who had arrived that week. And they stand you up in your skivvies. Two young flight surgeons walking around: “flat feet,” and so and so, listen to your heart, looking like buying a bunch of horses. Look you over, and they’re just calling out things to people. They come to me and the guy listens to me and says, “Heart murmur, disqualified.” He just goes on around, you know. So I go into his office, because he’s going to write me out, he says “We’re going to give you orders to somewhere else, wherever the Marine Corps wants to send you.” And I said, “You’ve got to be shitting me! What’s going on?” He said, “Lieutenant, you have a heart murmur.” And I said, “Yes, but I’ve had this murmur all my life. It was on my first physical coming in the Marine Corps. He said, “Yes but they should have never had sent you here. We don’t allow people into aviation with heart murmurs!” I said, “Don’t I have any recourse?” That was the nice thing about being a first lieutenant who’d been around awhile; at least I had the guts to say, “Is this really the final answer? Isn’t there anybody else I can talk too?” And this guy turned red as a beet; he really got upset, and he said, “Oh! OK! You want to talk to somebody else?” And I said, “Yes, sir.” He said, “Well, right next door is the

head of Navy Flight Physiology and Naval Aviation Medicine. I'll send you over there and let them tell you're disqualified. OK!!?" I said, "Yes, sir. I'd appreciate it." So they make a call, and I go in there and I check in and the guy who sees me is the head of it, a captain, Navy captain. I walk in there and he says, "Lieutenant, I hear you've got a problem." I said, "Yes, sir, I've got a heart murmur and I really think I should be able to fly. Isn't there anything that you can do?" And he said, "Well, our policy is not to let people in with heart murmurs because the track record is not good." And I said, "Well couldn't you make an exception? I've come all this way. I took this physical. I wanted to do this all my life. Here I am, and now you're going to tell me I don't even have a chance?" He said, "I'll tell you what we'll do, we'll run you through a battery of tests. Let some other doctors look at you, and then we'll talk about it." So I come in that next Monday and every test they had in those days they ran. By today's standards [they] are pretty crude. They had their first things with the sonograms and with the electrocardiograms, all these things, EKG's. They gave me several of those and did some X-rays. Had me swallow barium went through all that stuff. Had about eight or nine quacks [doctors], listen to me. I reported to him the next Friday after that Monday. And he's got this stack of stuff and he's just looking and looking. He gives me another physical exam himself, really a nice man. And when all is said and done he said, "Listen. You're in great physical condition. You're as strong as a horse, but, it's just this heart murmur. I think it's what we call a systolic, functional murmur. We just don't allow this in flight training." And I said, "Can't you just let one guy?" He said, "If I let one then that opens the door." I said, "Yes, but I won't tell anybody!" He said, "Ok, ok. I'll tell you what." We've got—he's serving his Reserve time--the head heart surgeon from Johns Hopkins, the hospital, he's here. Let me have him take a look at you and we'll talk about it." So he makes a call for Dr. So and So and we wait a few minutes, and here, comes in--this guy's just a crackerjack, you can tell, he is the 'cock of the walk.' Young guy! But he's just brilliant. And he walks in and he says, "What's up?" And he said, "Well this guy's got a extra-carotid-rhythmic-blockity-blitty-blatty..." you know they start talking doctor speak. [He] looks through all the stuff there and says, "Ok, ok, ok." He said, "Strip down! Let me take a look at you." So I'm down to the skivvies again. And first time I'd ever had a doctor who had me stand there and he sits down and looks at me; has me turn around, "Walk left, walk right, now lie down on the table." And the guy gets down, you know, and without putting a hand on me, he gets down to my toes and looks, it was quite an extraordinary thing. Finally he has me sit up and then he, without using his stethoscope, feels me all over and finally puts his stethoscope on me. And "Stand up, get down, step up, do steps." Does all that stuff. And it then he stands back and looks at me and turns to the other guy and he said, "Normal systolic murmur. He's

strong as a horse. Let the guy fly.” and walks out. And the captain says, “Ok.” signs me up, and says, “Ok, go do great things.”

Q: So persistence paid off?

General Howell: Shewwwweee [Phonetic] [exhale]. That was always the question. You know, it was always getting through admin stuff. To try to get to do what I wanted. What I thought I could do. So, we got through it and I started, I finally got into it. I had to take “stupid studies”. We had to have a background in physics and in math and I was very weak in those subjects.

Q: You had majored in political science.

General Howell: Oh yeah! So they gave us a pre-test and I flunked it miserably. I had to sit in through this class taking these courses that you do on your own, program texts; and took them, these program courses on physics.

Q: This was before your class started?

General Howell: Yes, four days, it took me an extra week. Of course, I’d had a week of physicals. So the guys I first report in with, they’re all out ahead of me and I finally get through stupid study, and I start ground school. In those days they had four weeks of ground school at Mainside.

Q: Did you call it pre-flight?

General Howell: Yes, pre-flight. That’s right.

Q: And it’s just academics?

General Howell: Yes, but it was really wonderful. I just thought it was great. You know, we had a great meteorology course, engines, power-plants, aerodynamics. Aerodynamics was tough. It’s funny, the guy who taught us aerodynamics was a Marine captain. His name was Henry Ivy, and he later on became my squadron commander at [VMFA] 115 over in Nam Phong, Thailand. But that was the toughest course-- Aerodynamics was a tough damn course, and I learned a lot. I just really thought it was neat and then they sent us to Saufley Field. In those days Saufley had all the

“teeny-weenies,” the T-34’s. They had one squadron of T-28s that was the boat squadron, for the Whiting [Field] guys. When the Whiting guys got through Whiting they would come there, to do carrier quals. So it was the carrier qual squadron for T-28s. So we went to Saufley and you would spend your first, [exhale] it seemed like it was either four weeks or six weeks at Saufley. You spent one half a day in ground school and then the other half day you start flying and then finally you end up flying all the time.

Q: Had you ever flown before?

General Howell: Never in my life.

Q: Not even been up in an airplane?

General Howell: I had been on an airliner when they took me to PLCs.

Q: So what did you think the first time you took control? Did you feel good about it?

General Howell: Awwww man. I tell you, the first time I got into an airplane with the motor running was the bailout part. You remember the bailout? They had a T-34 cut off right behind the cockpit it had a basket by it and they had the motor, they had the regular motor with a prop, and they would start that sucker up and we would have to get in it, strap in, and then they told you “BAIL OUT!!!” and you had to un-strap and, and jump out of that thing. The first time I got in that thing, and that motor was running, I’m thinking, “Man, this is great, I love it!” It was just so great! All that noise and power and bailing out. I just say, “This is just shit hot.” I loved it.

Q: Do you remember your first flight?

General Howell: The first time I got in an airplane, a guy named, Mike Paydo was my first instructor.

Q: Navy guy?

General Howell: No, he was a Marine. He was a Marine “Ford”, F4D driver. [He] was very upset that he was flying teeny-weenies. He thought he should be in the jet training. He was an excellent

instructor. I'll never forget-the first time we got up, you know students had to brief the hops. So you had to be prepared for your brief-- "Okay, what are we going to do today?" You had to go through the whole thing and they would add things. He was very pleasant, very gentlemanly and he would say, "Ok, go grab your chute and we'll meet at the airplane." Once you got within two feet of the airplane he turned into a monster; just started screaming at you [sentence spoken in a whisper]. I mean you couldn't do anything right: pre-flighting, starting, taxiing, and flying. Paydo would just scream and scream. He actually one time, this is no kidding, took his knee board off and hit me on the back of the head with it, coming in to the landing pattern. He said, Baaapp!! [Phonetic, simulating sound of knee board hitting him on the back of head], "YOU'RE TRYING TO KILL ME!, [screaming impersonation], "I'VE GOT A WIFE AND TWO KIDS AND YOU'RE TRYING TO KILL ME! YOU IDIOT! [voice cracks]" [screaming impersonation]. We get back, just screaming at you all the way back to the line. Of course, Saufley in those days, lot of people don't believe it, but it was 'no comm.' [communications]. In the teeny-weenies you would make a comm [communications] check after you started your motor, one of your procedures, "ground comm. [communications] check," "Loud and clear," that was the last thing you said. And you would stick your nose out and look at the tower; they'd see you sticking your nose out. They'd give you a, flash, a green light-- 'you're clear to taxi [what the tower was saying by flashing green light]. You'd find the duty runway; [it] was where the crash crew truck was. Saufley had about five runways and you had to make sure you knew how to get to the duty runway and you'd sit there and look at the tower to give you a green light for take off. And off you'd go. You'd go out in the area. Coming back in the pattern they had a, a twelve hundred foot entry pattern that was a circle around the field. You had to find your place in intervals so you didn't cut anybody out. Then you had to find where the duty runway, cause every time the wind changed they changed it. And you had to make sure you knew where the duty runway was. And then you would, when you got abeam the departure end of the duty runway, you would descend down to 800 feet. Then come in and do a break over the runway. It was flop, chop, 110 [knots] drop the gear, half flaps and then when you come around, when you had the runway made, go full flaps. That was the way. I'll never forget that as long as I live. But you'd have to practice all that because you're looking for lights. Nothing is said, except there's the instructor talking to you but it was it was all quiet and silent unless there was a problem. That was quite a remarkable experience. But Paydo, you'd get down, post flight, [he's] just still screaming at you all the way. Get three feet away from the airplane he'd say, "Ok, drop off your chute and we'll meet inside [calm voice]." And you'd go inside, just be very pleasant, "Well, you did ok on that and yeah that was average and that wasn't....

Q: [Laughing]

General Howell: You need to work on this, but, above average there, above average. Not a bad hop. See you tomorrow.”

Q: Interesting teaching technique.

General Howell: Sheewwww [Phonetic], it was unbelievable.

Q: So you stayed with him throughout?

General Howell: Up to solo. The big surprise, a lot of guys I guess knew it, but I was naïve I didn’t know it, that you get a solo check before your solo hop. You’d fly out to an outlying field and do ‘touch and go’s.’ They’d say, “Ok, we’re gonna make a full stop.” Now here’s one of these things that you’ll never forget. He’d say, “Ok, now don’t forget when you come up to the full stop you’ve got to taxi off because there’s other people in the pattern. So you taxi off and you taxi down to the approach end of the runway at the end of this outlying field.” He said, “Ok, wait a minute. I got something to tell you.” He said, “I’m going to un-strap and get out of this airplane.” He said, “Now you’re going to go out, you’re going to make sure nobody’s landing and you’re going to run out there and you’re going to go do a take off. Leave your gear down and just come around the pattern, do one ‘touch and go,’ and then come back and do a full stop and don’t forget to pick me up...”

Q: [Laughing]

General Howell: and then we’ll go.” That was my first solo. Got through that, picked him up. Then, came back and he said, “Ok. You’re ok, you’ve soloed.” Then your next hop it’s actually solo all the way. It’s great, very exciting, that was a total surprise to me that he got out of the airplane and let me fly it on my solo check. But I expected all the instructors to be like him. When you get into acrobatics, you’re next five or ten hops were acrobatics hops, where you get an instructional hop and then a solo hop, instructional hop, solo hop. I expect--my first instructor I went with, we take off go out to the area, nothing’s said, nothing’s going on and I’m thinking, “Man, I must be screwing this up bad because he hasn’t said a damn thing.” He demonstrates this,

demonstrates that, “Now you try it,” or “Now let’s try it again.” Do that, go around, come back, and, and my head is down because I am thinking, “This guy’s not saying anything, I’m must, be a loser.” And he said, “Pretty good. Not a bad hop. But, you need to work on this--. You’ll be all right. You’ll go somewhere.” I didn’t realize that most instructors weren’t, you know, jerks.

Q: And you would go somewhere, you got jets--they were flying what T-2s in those days?

General Howell: T-2A; one single engine, T-2.

Q: Was that at a different field?

General Howell: Yes, that was at Meridian, Mississippi. You go to Meridian. At the end of [primary] you either go props or jets. All the jet guys went up to Meridian, Mississippi for basic jets in the T-2. You went through your FAM [familiarization], basic instruments, formation flying, some acrobatics, and you get through that ok, they sent you, brought you back to Pensacola to VT-4 [Jet Training Squadron Four] at Forrest Sherman Field, for carrier quals and gunnery.

Q: All in the T-2?

General Howell: In the T-2A. This was all in the little single engine, under-powered little T-2. So you came and got through Meridian.

Q: Had you come across anything that was particularly difficult to do as far as flying?

General Howell: Yes. The first thing at Meridian, the thing, I just couldn’t get the picture initially, was rendezvousing during formation flying. My first flight in a jet was just exciting. But I said, “I’m never going to be able to master this. It goes too darn fast. I’m way behind.” I’ll never forget; I had a captain, a Marine captain; thank goodness he was very patient. His name was Conley, and he was a great; from Texas. I’ll never forget walking back in after it took me two or three attempts at the runway to get the thing into a place to land it and rolled out. And we’re walking back in and he sort of nudged me, my head was down and he said, “Howell, you’re going to be all right.” He said, “The only thing between you and me is about 3,000 flight hours, so you’re going to be okay, you’re going to do all right. Don’t worry.” And so I started picking it up. It was progressing very well. I actually got to fly with John McCain; he was one of my instructors.

Q: Is that right?

General Howell: He was an instructor in VT-7 up in Meridian and I flew instrument hops with him. Two or three instrument hops.

Q: You mean in your backseat?

General Howell: I was in his backseat. I was flying under the bag, he was an instructor.

Q: What kind of a guy was he? What kind of an instructor was he?

General Howell: He was a good guy and quite a maverick among those guys, because at Meridian, different places had different attitudes, [but] basic jet instructors at Meridian were jerks! They were hard-asses, didn't have anything to do with the students, had their own "Ready Room", their own lounge, and McCain wasn't like that. And as a matter of fact, McCain when you go to brief and you had a briefing room he'd say, "Ah, come on. Let's go to the instructors lounge and brief in there." And he'd piss off all the other instructors by doing that. He was friendly to the students, unlike like a lot of them.

Q: That seems unusual because his family was from the Navy aristocracy.

General Howell: Yes. McCain was just a casual guy. He had long hair, unruly almost. But he was so friendly and so I just remembered him because he was so different from the other guys. He was an excellent pilot and of course, basic instruments, you're under a bag, trying to learn how to fly an airplane on instruments for the first time. But I got through that okay.

Q: But the hardest thing was doing a rendezvous?

General Howell: Trying to get the picture. Stay on bearing and on altitude and knots, or else you go zipping by. I'll never forget, Conley was my guy as I recall. He finally told me, "Howell, you know, check hop is coming up, and you're struggling with this." He said, "If we don't get it this time, just want to warn you, probably going to have to re-fly, if you don't get it down, you're just not getting it." [Then General Howell responds] "Yes, sir." They buddied you up with one other

student to go through your basic formation flying, that was with a MarCad [Marine cadet], called Phil Roath. Phil and I, it's amazing on that check hop, both of us (sound of fingers snapping together) just clicked. Flew a perfect hop, just almost like they timed these things so you get it down at the right time.

Q: They say that sometimes, if you struggling, then all the sudden, it's like a light comes on.

General Howell: Yes. But it sort of frightened me, so from that day on I always worked hard to be a good formation pilot.

Q: And you wanted to fly jets, of course.

General Howell: No desire to do anything else.

Q: Even though you'd been around helicopters and everything as a grunt?

General Howell: Yes, well I had thought I wanted to be a helicopter pilot until I got to Pensacola and then the first thing I heard was, "Hey man, jets is the thing. If you really want to be a man you got to fly jets." I said, "That's what I want to do!" I pissed off a couple of my old helicopter buddies because of that.

Q: Was there any perception within the Marine aviation community that helicopter pilots were second class citizens?

General Howell: At that time, yes. Absolutely; the haves and have-nots, only the really best pilots can be jet guys. Coming out of Saufley the guys with the best grades got to choose what they wanted to do, got to choose jets. Everybody else went to props; that's just the way it was. So, you became very arrogant, thought you were special. I'm not saying it was appropriate, but it was the whole atmosphere was that way, that's just the way it was.

Q: Did that change, later on?

General Howell: It's changed. One thing is in those days a majority of the airplanes in the Marine Corps were fixed-wing. Now the majority are helicopters. So the whole shift in power and leadership and everything.

Q: Any special memories of carrier quals?

General Howell: Carrier quals--the first thing was that. Second challenge, when you got through Meridian and came back to Pensacola, you're really starting to feel good because you'd made it through basic jets and you know get the thing off, get it home, you soloed in it, and you're pretty good. Then they take you into gunnery. The gunnery pattern was very difficult. It's a squirrel cage and you've got four aircraft in this gunnery pattern, flying jets. My first couple of FAM hops in a gunnery pattern with an instructor, I just couldn't figure out what the hell we were doing. Going up to high key, reversal, go to low key and gun and all that kind of stuff. So I had actually my one and only down in all the flight training command was in the gunnery pattern initially--couldn't see the picture. First re-fly I go up, "Oh, okay. Now I understand."

Q: So the light comes on?

General Howell: So all the sudden, it just, the light comes on. [I] became a pretty good gunnery student too. But initially it was very difficult for me.

Q: When you have a problem like that, what do you do, go back to your room and ...

General Howell: Oh man. You walk around that BOQ room. I tell you at Saufley, my roommate and I used to have a diagram of the field and we used to walk around that field going through that landing pattern a million times, trying to get down how to get that airplane down on the ground, and do that with the gunnery pattern. You would get with all the guys who could fly and say, "You know, I'm having a hard time here." And they just talk you through the mechanics of it, you know, "you're pulling up going this way--just realize when you get to this area, when you reverse, this is where the banner's going to be, it's going to be right over there. You don't look back there. It's going to be there." So you finally figured out what you're doing. To me it was just confusing, and finally realized it's really situational awareness. Go to carrier quals and you know you just can't be sloppy in carrier quals. You've got to be precise. You've got to be on the ball and I realized how you've got to handle the airplane and get it to where you want it and keep it there. And you've got

to really stay on top of the airplane all the way, to make sure it's right where you want it to be to, you know 'on the ball', alignment, on speed. You've got to work it. Work hard. You can't relax. I didn't have any extraordinary difficulty. I found it just very demanding. I will never forget the first time flying out to the boat in a formation. You had four students with a leader. You take off, in a cruise [formation]. They said, "Now ok, let's loosen out the cruise so everybody can see." So you sort of spread out and then he's in a left turn, and he said, "Okay, now look down at left nine o'clock down there." He said, "On the water there's, there's where you're going to land." You look down and you say, "HOLY COW!!!" [Laughing] It was the *Lexington* and it was just TINY! On the first couple of passes you're hook's up, they just want to watch your pass and see how you're doing. I'll never forget, the first time you hit it and it makes that big BOINGGG! I'd never heard that before. You can actually hear the echo when you hit on the deck. At least I heard it, I thought I did. It's a different sound than landing on a runway. And you come off and you come around and it's all instruments. In FCLPs [field carrier landing practice] you have landmarks, no matter where you go bounce, you can figure out that this little farmer's house is a good spot, or right off there, that's a good, 90 degree [position] and all that what. Out on the water it's strictly instruments all the way around. Keeping time, heading and time, and just counting time and heading altitude to get to a good start so that you can come in and two bounces. Then the guy says, "Ok," whatever-your-call sign [is], you know, "drop your hook." And that's when you know you're going to come in and [land], that was really thrilling.

Q: The first time you caught the cable, what was that like?

General Howell: It really gets your attention. Then it's total harassment after that. "You didn't land right!" Power up and you're back and all the sudden the guys out in front of you—they're jockeying you around and you've got the air boss is screaming at you, "Get that airplane over there right away! Get him out of the way! Come on! Hurry up there!" [impersonation done in a mean fast paced gruff yelling voice] They were on your ass!

Q: They really want things moving along on that flight deck.

General Howell: Oh they do. They do. And you don't really understand that until you get into it. It's just hectic and, and fast and move and get with it! Be on top of it, and I guess that's the one thing I learned, it taught me to respect carrier aviation. Those guys are on the ball. I mean they are on it all the time. There's no slack. There's absolutely no slack. And so you go through four

renditions. Of course the first CAT [Catapult] shot is a thrill. It's just "WOW!" It just boom-wow and then you think, "Holy Shit! I'm going to fall!" But you look down and you've got 130 knots and you're climbing.

Q: Wow. So, you didn't have any trouble with that?

General Howell: No. It was just...

Q: A lot of people have people have trouble with that's the thing that they tend to have more trouble with. ...

General Howell: Oh, yes. It's so demanding. It wasn't easy. It was not easy, but I did it, and got through it. My grades from that were not exceptional grades. I think I had one ok and three you know fair. And I had a one wire which really pissed the LSO off. I was spotting the deck.

Q: Your first landing though, was that a, what a three wire? You remember?

General Howell: I think it was a two wire. Yes, I had a bad habit of spotting the deck.

Q: They were only using the Fresnel lens at that time right?

General Howell: Yes. But they, they really had not perfected it, but it was still a wonderful device.

Q: Where did you go from there?

General Howell: Went to advanced jets at Beeville [Texas].

Q: What were you flying there?

General Howell: F-9. TF-9 Cougar; I really enjoyed that. The big demanding thing was to get your instrument card there; eighteen, seventeen flights under the bag. That was very demanding. But just mastered it and felt very comfortable.

Q: That's a single engine plane too, wasn't it?

General Howell: Yes, 5,500 pounds of static thrust.

Q: Did they have a straight wing?

General Howell: No these were swept wing. This is your first swept wing jet. You had to go through a very extensive aerodynamics course, asymmetrical drag and all that kind of stuff. I enjoyed it; loved it. [Did] formation flying, went aboard ship in that. You had your choice--you got to fly a little single seat Cougar too, the little AF-9, a little bit in gunnery. You had a choice when you go aboard ship, fly the single seat or two seat. I just felt more comfortable in the two-seater because I had flown it so much more, but you don't have anybody in the back.

Q: You fly solo.

General Howell: I flew the two-bagger aboard ship. The first arrested landing I'd forgotten to lock my harness and, thank God my helmet caught on the canopy or else I would have smashed my face in that damn gun sight. And [slight laughter] I racked my shin up. And some how when I arrested my shin hit the instrument panel. I mean that hurt. I can touch it right there. It is still sore. I was in intense PAIN the whole rest of the time I was out there. I was crying it hurt so bad. Just got through it you know.

Q: Did you have to do three landings on that time?

General Howell: No, four. Four traps. They bounce you a couple times and then its "drop your hook." And you had to do four traps and four cats. Then you come on home. The big deal about Beeville then was they still had the F-11 Tigers, at VT-26. So you got through carrier quals in the F-9 and then you went to the F-11 and got to fly it. That was the Navy's first supersonic-- straight and level, fighter. The Blue Angels used to fly the F-11. I don't know if you remember what it looks like. Looked like a cigar with two little wings on it. It was a beautiful airplane, but it didn't have hardly any gas in it. It was single seat, didn't have any two-seaters. So, you go over to VT-26, didn't really have any good simulators either, so, [chuckle] you'd get over there and your instructors get you into a procedures trainer and really hammer that into you, everything. But your first hop in it is a solo hop. Your instructor does a formation take-off on you, on your first hop.

Q: This is right towards the end of your training.

General Howell: Yes. And all you did there, seemed like it was twenty-five flights. FAM, formation and air combat maneuver, basic air combat maneuvering. Then you also do gunnery. You had to do supersonic gunnery in that thing. High key was at, as I recall it was at, 30,000 feet, with the banners down at around 18,000. So you're right at supersonic when you're coming by the banner. It was really quite, quite impressive.

Q: Did you go through flight school with anyone that you knew later on in your career, any contemporaries that stayed with you?

General Howell: Absolutely. A couple of instructors. One guy was Pat Faulkner, had been a Ford driver, he was still a first lieutenant as an instructor there. And we ended up in Vietnam together flying at [VMFA] 542, and became good friends. He's just a wonderful fellow. [He's now] selling Mercedes down in Havelock City, I think. And then John Ditto. Do you remember Ditto? He had the A-4 squadron when we were over in WestPac, the 'Wake Island Avengers.' John was an instructor there and he really became a role model for me. I really respected the hell out of him.

Q: In what sense? You mean when he was instructing?

General Howell: Instructor. He was squared-away, he was just a guy [who] never looked bad in a uniform as a Marine. A lot of Marines when they get into an aviation unit, they get a little sloppy. When he gave a briefing it was an excellent briefing and the guy could really fly an airplane, not as good as he thought he could, as you know. But John Ditto was the epitome, in my mind, of a Marine officer and aviator. He just impressed the hell out of me. Only time I had flown with him was in some air combat maneuvering in training, in big formations. They had a couple of hops where you went up with four and five planes for a many v [versus] many in little trainers. So we became very good friends later on and our wives were good friends, right until his death. And Susan is still a very good friend. He got killed in a Harrier later on. I don't know if you knew that story.

Q: I'm not sure, what happened?

General Howell: He was a colonel at Cherry Point, getting ready to get the group, was trying to FAM in a Harrier. And got into one of these deals and before he got out of it, it was on its back. Remember that time Player gunned him and he refused to believe that Player had shot him?

Q: I think so.

General Howell: That was at Iwakuni? John had a huge ego. He just didn't think anybody could beat him in an airplane. And most people couldn't. But what's the [saying], ain't 'never been a horse that ain't been rode or a rider that ain't been thrown.'

Q: Player was good.

General Howell: Player WAS good. Remember we had some dissimilar combat [maneuvering] with [VMA] 223, the Wake Island guys? We were over in Iwakuni we did some dissimilar ACM [air combat maneuvering] with those guys and Player nailed Ditto. And they had, he had a tape recording of it.

Q: I think I remember that, not sure.

General Howell: Yes, he had a tape recording of it. And Ditto refused, he refused, he would not admit it. He said, "Bullshit! That didn't happen."

Q: [Chuckling]

General Howell: And it did. Later, they had some good guys came up to us later and said "There's a lot of guys in this squadron have been rebuked by the CO saying that they didn't do what they did." He could never lose a fight. So that was John's-- you know that ended up killing him. He got into a problem in the airplane and refused to get out of it when he had a chance. He just refused to believe--and he had already had to punch out of an airplane over in Taiwan as a lieutenant. So John, you know there was that part of him that killed him later on. And I loved him like a brother though and really respected him.

Q: Pride come before a fall, as the old saying goes.

General Howell: Yes. So he and Captain Conley, up in Meridian, Paydo, I really, just respected the heck out of Paydo.

Q: Did you do any air-to-ground training, as part of flight school?

General Howell: In advanced, in the F-9, we did air-to-mud [slang for air-to-ground, or practice bombing] with Mk-76s, and I was marginal. I didn't do anything to write home about. Got through the pattern ok, but they just give you a smattering of it.

Q: Did you notice a difference in camaraderie or off-duty activity as you go from the infantry to the air wing?

General Howell: Oh yes, absolutely. I didn't see that: Camp Schwab, Okinawa. second lieutenant, Happy Hour, Friday night, but Pendleton was not that way. At Pendleton everybody went to the four winds on Friday, because people lived out in town and all over the place. Camp Schwab, we were all there so everybody went to the club for Happy Hour. But you'd walk into the club as a first lieutenant, all the field grade were in one part of the bar and all the captains were in one section, and then all the first and second lieutenants weren't even at-- we didn't even have a place at the bar. You sort of gathered at some tables and you would never dare to go over and start talking to some captains or field grades unless they called you and asked you to come over. I mean it was STRICT protocol. They would--"Who are you?" and "Get out of here." I mean that's the way it was. You just didn't socialize, didn't associate with each other. Aviation: "Hey, we all fly together. We risk death together; we're all in this thing together."

Q: So rank is not any sort of a barrier, social barrier, anyway?

General Howell: That's it. That was a big difference. And I saw that with these helo guys, in town at Olongapo and other places, at the bar at Cubi. And it really made a lot more sense. In flight training the more seasoned you got, by the time you got to advanced, the instructors became more civil. You'll see them at the bar and they'll chat with you and they'll tell you sea stories. By the time you get to VT-26 at Beeville, [they] had their own section at the bar. The bar was located in Beeville at the O-Club [Officer's Club]. It had sort of a shape like this, [drawing shape to illustrate shape of VT-26 bar section at Beeville O-Club. It was shaped like a horseshoe. There's a wall behind it, right here--that was VT-26's side, that's where VT-26 went.

Q: Students and instructors?

General Howell: Yes, not until you were in VT-26. Then you were a Tiger. They were the Tigers, VT-26. Until you got in that squadron you did not dare go over there. And every instructor in VT-26 had two mugs with his call sign and dash two (-2). And the minute you got in that squadron you could take your instructors mug and drink out of your instructor's mug. Oh boy, that was a big deal. So when I became an instructor, later on, in VT-21 at Kingsville--a buddy of mine, Tom Conley, and I got the squadron commander's approval--we built a big mahogany board with pegs, ordered mugs for all the instructors with, you know dash one and dash two, got that going at Kingsville when I was at Kingsville. But that one at Beeville impressed the heck out of me. Well, "Handsome" Al Ransom; remember Ransom? He was a first lieutenant instructor in VT-26 when I went through--quite a character, even then. But I guess I was senior to him, but I was a student. Before they let you take off in an, a F-11 you had to go out to the RDO [runway duty officer] shack and watch, at least three days, landings. You have people with the RDO, and he'd coach you and tell what's good and what's not. [The] F-11 had speed breaks on the belly. And if you let them out with the gear down you'd scrape them right off, because they were below the gear. It was quite a remarkable machine. I'll never forget, Ransom taxiing out, Beeville had dual runways. He was doing a banner tow in an F-11 and he taxied out in an F-11 and I'm watching him over there. He's sitting there, he's got the cockpit open. He's waiting while their hooking up the banner and the intakes on the F-11 are right behind the cockpit. He's out there, got his arms out, he's on the runway waiting for the sailors down there to hook and hang the banner. He sort of puts his hands out there and all the sudden hand goes in the intake, and he goes, "Holy!" and he's pulling, he's pulling and I grabbed the officer. I said, "Sir! Look at, look at this!" And Ransom's doing this, and goes, "Aaahhhh!!!" He pulls his hand out and he's flashing us the bird!

Q: [Laughing]

General Howell: You know, it was just a JOKE! You know that's Ransom! You know he's been that way all his life. He just laughed. He, you know got me good. I thought, "Oh God, he's going to get dragged down that intake." But he was quite a character. However, he was also a very professional instructor. That's another thing that just impressed me as a student. Was how incredibly professional all of our instructors were all the way through flight training. Those guys really knew their stuff and they were dead serious about it. They really worked at it. I realized

later, as an instructor, you know at VT-21: one, instructor training is very tough. These guys [students] are trying to kill you and that's why as an instructor, you really pay attention and watch these guys. You're serious because being an instructor is not easy.

Q: Looking at some of your fitness reports from that time and one comment that was on one of them—"you were an inspiration to your colleagues."

General Howell: You're kidding!

Q: That's right. And you were ranked three of thirty-five (3 of 35) in your pre-fight class. Another one said you were most popular among contemporaries.

General Howell: [slight chuckle]

Q: The impression I got was that you were guiding these younger guys along. Were you using your infantry officer leadership?

General Howell: Well, I was pretty salty. Most of the guys were right out of college. Lot of them hadn't been to Basic School; in those days, Vietnam, a lot of aviators weren't required to go through Basic School because they were pushing them through to get their wings. So I had been there and back, I was pretty salty, and I guess they looked at me for, for guidance and leadership and I was happy to provide it. So I guess, I talked to guys and I used to insist that Marines look good in their uniforms.

Q: Even in flight school?

General Howell: Yes. At Saufley, I'll never forget--I didn't realize when I first got there that MarCads, they had a tradition, that once a MarCad and NavCads (these are naval cadets, they are not officers. They are cadets in training and when they get their wings they get their commission), that once they soloed they weren't required to salute lieutenants anymore, or second lieutenants or ensigns. I didn't know that. So, the first time I'm walking down the street at Saufley, right at noontime, there's a million guys coming and going from the flight line. And here come a couple of MarCad's walking, strolling, and they go by and don't salute. I said, "Hey!" "Huh, you talking to me?" [General Howell] "Yeah, I'm talking to you. Didn't you forget something?" "I don't know.

I think I got everything.” [General Howell] “Don’t you salute officers?” This guy said, “Lieutenant, I don’t need to salute!” And he’s pointing at his solo bar, they wear these solo bars. And I tell you, I just, I turned on to that poor guy, I just, “Raaaaarrrrrrrr-Awwwwwww!!!!”

Q: [Laughing]

General Howell: I tell you we were on one side of the street across from the mess hall. By the time our conversation ended, he was up against the wall of the mess hall. I just was in his face, just walked him all the way across the street and just read him the riot act. And found out later that, solo guys traditionally don’t salute ensigns or second lieutenants. I said, “Well, I’m a first lieutenant and THEY SALUTE MEEEE!”

It was funny, after that word got around fast and, and MarCads would see me coming and they go, they’d turn, they’d walk the other way.

Q: Like the gate guard [Laughing].

General Howell: Man, they did not want to get close to me [laughing].

Q: You made a reputation there.

General Howell: So, well I did. That carried all the way into Meridian. It wasn’t until Phil Roath, I’ll never forget, one of these defining moments, Phil Roath and, I after that, that formation hop, we’re in the student locker room getting out of our gear, sweaty gear, and all that. He turned around and slaps me on the back and he said, “God dang! Jeff!” He said, “What a great hop that was! That was just, you know, we did it!” And I’m thinking right then, “That’s the first MarCad that’s ever called me Jeff, what do I do?” I said, “Phil it was great. Damn right! Good for us.” And that’s and that’s finally where even Howell sort of took off his pack a little bit, and started acting more human.

Q: Started to become the aviator?

General Howell: Yes. That’s it. That’s the truth.

Q: It's different cultures, entirely different cultures ground and air. Leadership techniques are they the same in one culture as opposed to another?

General Howell: Yes, you take techniques, techniques may be different but the principles, the same principles apply, same principles. You know setting the example, be technically proficient, seek responsibility, be all those things, [they] apply no matter, as the head of Johnson Space Center and SAIC [Science Applications International Corporation] or teaching at the University of Texas, or being a PhD at Quantico. Leadership, individual leadership, those principles apply to you no matter where you are or what you do. If you try to apply them they help you become a better leader.

Q: Anything else on flight school?

General Howell: I think I've talked to you to death on that. I could talk for hours. I'll say this, it inspired me. I guess the only other statement I'd make at this time, maybe it'll make me a heretic, but if I had not gone to flight training I don't think I would have stayed in the Marine Corps. I don't think I would have made it a career. I was really proud of being a Marine. I was proud to be an infantry officer but frankly, in my life I felt something was missing. There was a challenge there that was just missing and I wasn't finding it as an infantry officer. When I became an aviator it filled that void. Being a Marine, a Marine officer, and a Marine fighter pilot was just wonderful. It was one of the most fulfilling things and so, I was a happy man. So, going to flight training filled a need in my life that I don't think I could have found anywhere else. It was wonderful. It was just a wonderful thing for me and I feel very blessed that I had the good fortune to get through that flight physical and get into flight training and be an aviator. I'm very, very blessed to have done what I've gotten to do.

Q: Okay, well we can cut it off for today.

General Howell: Alright, let's go.

END SESSION I

PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

SESSION II

9 May 2006

Q: This is the second session of the interview with Lieutenant General Jefferson Davis Howell by Dr. Fred Allison, its 9 May, 2006. Yesterday we talked about flight school, to finish that up, what do you recall about your winging ceremony?

General Howell: It really was a special event. Of course, the carrier qual was just wonderful, coming back and landing and getting that thing back safely on the runway. I'm not going to blow a tire [phonetic] like a lot of guys did. It was wonderful, but then the icing on the cake was going over to VT-26 and flying the Tiger [F-11] and flying supersonic and getting a little ACM [air combat maneuvering] and some high altitude gunnery, that was really a hoot. And so, when we got our wings it was really special to me. It was really a big deal to me. I had wanted to wear those wings so bad and you're there with guys you went all the way through with, which really makes it special. Plus, what was really special to me is that Beeville is only about 45 miles from Victoria, my hometown. So, my parents were able to drive over. My father was getting quite old, but my mother was still active and still with the Victoria School District. She brought him over and two of my sisters came with some of their families to the winging ceremony.

I think it was the base commander, Captain Parasieu, that gave it. As I recall there were three squadrons at Beeville and I think the base commander somehow was in the chain-of-command, even though it was CNATRA, [Chief of Naval Air Training], I don't think he came over. That was a satellite base, so he had a captain there. It was a simple ceremony in a conference room up in the main building there at Beeville. But, it was just very special because getting the designation – you know your unique number as a naval aviator – getting qualified and getting that, that was really a big deal.

Q: Do you remember your number?

General Howell: No. I should, but I don't. It was V-something, you know fixed-wing pilot. I think I got that card in my billfold some place.

Q: How did you learn that you were going to get Phantoms, or did you know at that time?

General Howell: That's a good question. At that time, we were asking where we were going to go and all the fixed-wing guys, Marine-types, either went east coast or west coast. If you went west coast you had a good chance of getting F-8 Crusaders and, or Phantoms. Everybody wanted to go Crusaders because they were single-seat and a hotrod. We had just flown the F-11 and thought we had really "hung the moon." Then, if you went east coast, you knew you were going to get Phantoms or maybe A-4's or A-6's.

Q: So you really didn't know if you were going to go attack or fighter at that time.

General Howell: No, you didn't, just fixed-wing jets.

Q: But you got east coast.

General Howell: I got orders to Cherry Point and I was disappointed because a lot of my buddies who went west coast, they had the chance to fly the Crusader. So, when I got to Cherry Point, and checked into Cherry Point, this was – I got my wings in November [1965]. Got there and checked in. The first thing they say, "Well?" I said, "Which squadron am I going to?" They didn't have a RAG [replacement air group] then, so you were assigned to a squadron and the squadron FAM'd [familiarization] you in the airplane. I was assigned to MAG-24 [Marine Air Group 24]. MAG-24, at that time, was in Cherry Point and it had A-6's, A-4's, and F-4's. It had two F-4 squadrons: [VMFA] 531 and [VMFA] 513. And so, I asked, "Which squadron am I going to?" And they said, "Hams." [slang for H&MS-headquarters and maintenance squadron]. Like all the nuggets [first tour aviators], every nugget went into Hams then they put you in a queue waiting to get your turn to get into one of the tactical squadrons. So, as I recall, I was about number 17 on the line at that time. The first thing they asked me was, "Are you married? Or are you a bachelor?" I said, "Well, I'm a bachelor." They said, "Oh, ok. We've got a good deal for you. Second MAW [Marine Aircraft Wing] needs a liaison officer up at Lakehurst [New Jersey] for the expeditionary catapult test they are doing up there at Lakehurst. So, we're going to send you up there as a liaison. It just happens to be over Christmas." So, I got a six-week detail, during the month of late November – from Thanksgiving all the way through December into New Year's – up at Lakehurst.

Q: [Laughing] New Jersey in the wintertime!

General Howell: Freezing my butt off up there on their flight line. I mean it was cold. My job,

when I got up there, was to be sort of a liaison because the Marine aviation reserves had been tasked to provide support for the test. They were testing both the catapult and the arresting gear. You know, the M-15 was a part of that thing, but they also had a ground catapult system, too.

Q: Was this for a SATS [short airfield for tactical support] strip?

General Howell: It was a SATS rig. The thing was run by two J-79 engines. It was noisy and huge. There were a million cables and pulleys. It was unbelievable, but I went up there. My main job was to call all over the United States, everyday, for the next day trying to get reserves to come up there and fly in there and Cat [catapult] and Trap [an arrested landing] up there. Sometimes it was easy and sometimes they didn't want to have anything to do with me. It was no fun! The only good deal I got out of it was that I had an F-4 come up, out of 2d MAW. I called up, out of desperation, and said, "I can't get the reserves can ya'll send anybody?" And they needed F-4 testing, too. So, I got a couple of F-4's to come up and a guy gave me a ride in the backseat of an F-4. That's the first time I got in an F-4. I did a Cat and flew up over New York City, then came back and landed. That was interesting. That was exciting.

Q: Did they ever use that equipment in a functioning SATS strip though?

General Howell: They did. I've actually catapulted myself, out of Cherry Point. They brought one down to Bogue Field.

Q: I see. How did you get out of that assignment?

General Howell: But, I spent that time up there lonely, miserable and not flying. Finally, I got back down. So, I said, "Hey, I've been up there. Now, when am I getting into a squadron?" It was, "Don't hold your breath. You're now the H&MS training officer because you used to be a grunt. So, we're going to let you be our training officer, and oh-by-the-way we're having an ORI [operational readiness inspection] an IG [inspecting General] inspection, in a month. We've been a little lax in our training, so you've got to get that straightened out." I busted my hump and we didn't do well at all. I was just too--trying to put together what they'd been neglecting for a couple years. But, really I think I disappointed my squadron commander, he was an old guy, LtCol D. Wiggins, he was a great guy. He was very kind to me. But, he sort of hinted, he said, "Just go in those records and fill them in and you know, we'll make up the training later, but let's...

[extremely raspy, slow and relaxed intonation].” This guy was an old mustang [officer who was previously enlisted], he said, “You know, we don’t want the group commander to look bad, so let’s just... [extremely raspy, slow and relaxed intonation].” And I said, “Colonel, I can’t do that.” And he said, “Well, do what you think is right, but it doesn’t hurt to just fill in things... [extremely raspy, slow and relaxed intonation].” You know, he really wanted me to gun deck [falsify] all of these training records.

Q: Sounds like an interesting character. So, you would not go along with that?

General Howell: I just couldn’t do it. So, we ate it. I think I disappointed him, but he never held it against me. I’ll say that for him. He was quite a character. One of his famous and favorite things—he used to take the sergeant major and they drive down to Morehead City every week. He would say, “We’re just going to do a little trolling down there. Just see what’s down there. See if any young ladies are around. [extremely raspy, slow and relaxed intonation].” Of course, he was an old married guy, but he was a player all the way. He was something else. He would say, “You know, I got married down in South Carolina and I go down there every year. Every year, I go down there to see if my marriage license has expired.” He said, “You know, my hunting license and my driver’s license and my car license, all those expire, but my dag-gone marriage license never expires. And I just keep hoping. [extremely raspy, slow, relaxed, and sarcastic tone].” He was really a character.

Q: Did you get to do any flying in H&MS?

General Howell: I waited and waited, and was flying the T-2A at that time. Flying from time-to-time, on cross-countries down to Pensacola where my sweetheart was, who I later married.

Q: This being Janel...

General Howell: Janel [Crutchfield] and I had been in a running gun battle ever since I got in flight training. We were desperately in love, but then would falter and fall out of love. Or I wanted to get married and she didn’t, and she wanted to get married and I didn’t. You know, this had been going on for over a year and a half.

Q: How did you two meet?

General Howell: Met at a wedding. A buddy of mine, Jerry Hornick, another student and another former infantry officer, he was older like me. His sweetheart, he brought her down there and they got married. Janel was living in a little duplex, in one side of it, and they rented the other side. So, they invited her to the wedding and we actually met at the wedding. Of course, she was a single schoolteacher down there, University of Alabama graduate. She was just surrounded by all these--stud guys, but I managed to get her attention and we started dating. We were a thing, but we butted heads a lot. So, and that's been going on for 40 years now, since our marriage.

Q: But, a year and a half later you're back down there in Cherry Point.

General Howell: Yes, back and forth, still flying the T-2 and waiting. So, finally it's my turn. The guy who had gotten there a week ahead of me got assigned to a squadron. And so, I'm waiting. So then, the next week, the guy behind me gets assigned to a squadron.

Q: That's not good.

General Howell: So, I go to the skipper [commanding officer] and I say, "What's going on?" And he says, "Well, Jeff you've already been overseas and back. You've got an overseas control date and these guys don't. So, we can keep you here and because of your ground experience you can really help us, and [provide] stability to the MAG here, and be their training officer. You'll get over there eventually." And by this time, Vietnam had really gotten hot, this was '66. I had just heard that my old battalion had shipped in and gone into country.

Q: 3-3 [3d Battalion, 3d Marine Regiment]?

General Howell: Well no, actually it was 2/5. That outfit, a lot of those guys, a lot of them were still in that outfit I think; and they went over and went in with the 1st Marines. There was some more of this trading of flags. I was really upset that my buddies were in combat and yet I had not been. I felt like a traitor. So, I said, "I've got to get over there." So, I went and I asked the squadron commander and said, "Sir, can I go over and talk to the people over at MAG?" He said, "Oh sure, you can do that." So, I went over and talked to the [S-] 1, he gave me that same story. I went and talked to the 3 [S-3], and finally I said, "I'd like to request mast with the group commander." They said, "Well, wait a minute, let's take another look at you. Give us a week to

work this.” I made them a little nervous I think. So, it’s funny, I went on a cross-country on a Sunday and came back. One of the scariest moments of my life was getting caught in a thunderstorm going to the Shaw Air Force Base on the way back. I don’t think I’ve ever been more frightened before or since, in my life than that event. I landed at Shaw and decided to stay that night because the sun had gone down, and this guy and I almost got killed in a T-2. We got vectored right into the middle of a thunderstorm by approach control. And I was too stupid-- you know-- as a new pilot to realize that I should not have accepted that vector because I had seen all this crap and it being just pitch black, but you saw all the lightening and everything. That airplane got thrown all over the sky. We went up and down. We got caught in an updraft and a downdraft. I took that basic instrument training they taught and just held that gyro steady while I was watching the altimeter winding up and winding down...DOWN in the seat being pulled and UP [voice inflects the shaking of the aircraft and vibration of control]--it was just hairy. Finally, the last thing I still had that worked – thank God – my TACAN [tactical air navigation] was still locked on Shaw. I just said, “Screw this.” I just turned and put the needle on the nose and rode through this damn thing and BOOM! We popped out about five miles off the end of the runway at 10,000 feet [Laughing].

Q: Wow!

General Howell: I just dove for that. I called the tower, “Hi, I’m here. I want to land.” They said, “Well there’s a thunderstorm on the other end of the field, but the duty is the other way.” And I said, “I can’t do that I’ve got to get this thing down. I’ve got to get down.” He said, “Okay, nobody else is around, go ahead and land it.” And POOOOFFFFFTTTT! I think I touched down at midfield, but we got it stopped. I turned off the runway and KABLOOOM! This storm hit and I sat out on the end of that runway for about fifteen minutes in this driving rain and wind, just shaking, JUST SHAKING! I taxied in, and they said, “You know you have a flight plan to Cherry Point from here, do you want us to initiate this?” [I said,] “No. I’m staying.” I called the duty, then came into Cherry Point the next day and there was a guy standing out on the flight line waiting for me. He said, “Where-the-hell-you’ve-been? [Fanatic, inquisitive intonation]!” I said, “Well, I’ve been at Shaw [relaxed, nonchalant intonation].” He said, “You were supposed to be in F-4 ground school, RIGHT NOW!!! [Fanatically hurried intonation].” He said, “They’re assigning you to Phantoms. You don’t have a squadron yet, but you’re going to Phantoms.” So, I went and started ground school for the F-4 and about three weeks later I got assigned to 531. So, all the sudden I get moved into 531 and get started getting ready to fly. Then, about a month later, I

finally got my first FAM hop in the F-4 with a guy named “Ernie” Pyle. They called him “Ernie” because of the famous Ernie Pyle and I don’t remember his first name. He was a great guy. He was a helicopter retread, but he had a couple of hundred hours in the F-4 so he was ready to FAM me.

Q: What were thoughts on the F-4, a brand new plane for the Marine Corps at this time?

General Howell: Oh, it was. It was just amazing, the old wives’ tale of, “You’re okay in this airplane as long as you keep it out of the buffet. Don’t get in the buffet in this airplane.” You’re not really flying it unless you’re in the buffet. We learned a lot over the next several years. But, at that time, people were really afraid of the airplane. They’d had a lot of BLC [boundary layer control] problems of valves staying open and airplanes blowing up and that kind of stuff. So, the F-4 people were really spooked by it. It was a lot to handle after everything else. It just went so fast compared to other airplanes.

Q: What do you recall of your first flight?

General Howell: I’ll never forget, the first time I got inside – strapped in – for my first flight and looked around and I couldn’t see the wings. That’s my first experience in an airplane where you couldn’t see the wings in the cockpit. I went, “This ain’t gonna do.” For the wings, you had to look waaaayyyy back there to see the wing tips!

Q: It was a little bit unsettling?

General Howell: It was. But, it was just amazing taxiing out and everything.

Q: Was this the B model?

General Howell: Yes, it was the F-4B. Basic weight: 28,000 pounds. On the roll, things happened fast, everybody talked about PIO’s [pilot induced oscillations] and all that. But, just held it – got the gear and flaps up – all of the sudden I said, “Man! This is great!” I knew I was way behind it, but still it was just such a sweet flying machine. I went up and just did an area FAM and did some mild maneuvering and then got it back. The thing that really impressed me was, once you put the gear and flaps down it was just SOLID! You know, gear and flaps down on an F-4 pooooofffffft!

[phonetic] It was there, and just all you need, the throttle just bring it on down. So, I fell in love with it.

Q: Love at first sight or first flight.

General Howell: Just from the very beginning, just loved it. So, get into training and going through basic stuff and radar stuff. In the interim, Janel and I, later that spring she came up to visit me. I said, "Why don't we knock this stuff off and get married?" And so, she said, "Okay." So, she said, "When?" I said, "How about today?" She said, "Alright." So, I met her down in Wilmington [NC]. She flew in from Pensacola to--it was a little town in North Carolina, south of Havelock down there.

So, I met her at the airport that morning. Proposed and we went down and drove downtown, got a marriage license and got our blood tests. Went and bought two rings and then went and found a Baptist preacher and got married by five o'clock that afternoon.

Then drove back up to my bachelor pad, walked in the door, and everybody says, "Where have you--" Big party, we always, it was a Friday, had to be a Friday, and big party at the house. I lived with two other idiots-Bill McBride and Ray Hamilton-- there on the beach at Ocean Beach across from Morehead [City]. They said, "Oh man, Howell, where've you been? Oh, Janel's here. [intoxicated intonation]." I said, "Yes, I want everybody to meet my new wife [proud intonation]." And they said, "Oh yeah, April Fool's! [raspy intoxicated intonation]" I didn't realize it was April Fool's Day [Laughing]. We got married on April Fool's Day [Laughing]. And so, we didn't even realize what the date was [extreme laughing]. So, that's our wedding anniversary.

Q: [laughing] Interesting. What did Janel do then, move up?

General Howell: No, she went back to [Pensacola] and finished teaching for that spring. So then finally went down and picked her up and brought her up in June. We lived in a little base quarters there in Hancock Village, right off the base there in Havelock. Those are now corporals and sergeants' quarters, but I was a captain by this time.

Q: Your family wasn't upset or anything about that, or her family?

General Howell: No. My mother, she had met Janel when I was down in Texas, Janel had come and visited and we'd gone by Victoria and she had met my parents. My mother loved anybody that

I loved. My mother had been concerned about me marrying someone who was not compatible, from another region or a part of the country, a Yankee or what-have-you.

Q: Being in the military that would certainly be a possibility.

General Howell: Yes, and so I think she was very relieved that I married a southern girl of quality. You know a college graduate and all that. So, she was very pleased I think. They got to be good friends down the road.

Q: That's interesting. Do you recall the early training in the F-4?

General Howell: Here I am Fam-ing, deployed down to Roosevelt Roads for a missile shoot and my first Sparrow [AIM-7, air-to-air missile] I ever fired, knocked the Ryan 'Firebee' right out of the sky.

Ryan sent me a plaque. That was the first plaque I ever got, and Ryan sent it to me for knocking down a Ryan Firebee with a Sparrow missile.

Q: Who was your RIO [radar intercept officer]?

General Howell: A guy named Don Redman was in the back. We had, [VMFA] 531, had a bunch of former enlisted RIO's. They had just gotten their commissions. As a matter of fact, they were all warrants [warrant officers] at that time and over the next year or two, they all got commissioned. We had guys like [Eugene S.] "Mule" Holmberg.

Q: Mule was legendary.

General Howell: Yes, and Don Gregory and Don Redman. All these guys were former enlisted RIO's, and they were good. They were just excellent. They taught you a lot. Those guys had more time in the F-4. A lot of these guys had already been overseas, and back, in the F-4 and had deployed to Japan in F-4's then had come back. They saw a little bit of action in Vietnam. I think they just went in on like a 30 day kind-of-a-thing into Da Nang and came out. So, they were veterans but hadn't seen much.

Q: They'd been to war?

General Howell: They had been to war. We also deployed twice, while I was in the squadron, out to Yuma for 30 day mostly air-to-ground stuff. So, we really did a lot of air-to-ground. I got pretty dog-gone good at dropping bombs and firing rockets. I didn't do much gunnery at all, all we carried was the Mark-4 [gun pod] and those things didn't work very well. A lot of "snake [snake-eye retarded bomb] and napes [slang for napalm] and a lot of Mark-76's.

Q: Did you do any CAS [close air support] training or anything like that, where you're really talking to a FAC [forward air controller]?

General Howell: Not much at all.

Q: They didn't have anything like a CAX [combined arms exercise] did they at that time?

General Howell: No, nothing like that. It was just go out, go to a target, you know, Inkey Barley or Kitty Baggage [raked range bomb targets at Yuma], those same old targets that have been there forever, they were still there then. I got to do a lot of live stuff out in the Chocolate Mountains, you know the ranges. We didn't really have many mock-ups like they have now, you know all those wonderful little towns, cities, and SAM [surface-to-air missile] sites. We didn't have any of that. There might be an old tank hulk or something out there that you would hammer, but that was it. I just don't remember ever being controlled by a FAC anywhere. It was just all of this going out and dropping, and "control your own" kind of stuff, if you're out in a live fire place.

Q: Did you feel that this was good preparation for going to war?

General Howell: We were ready. In those days, they called us "80-Hour Wonders." If you got 80 hours and had the right X's [training sorties] you were combat qualified to go to Vietnam. I was watching that queue. I had been in the squadron since that spring, of 1966.

Q: I show you getting to [VMFA] 531 in May, 1966. When did you get orders to Vietnam?

General Howell: By the next fall the guys who are ahead of me are getting orders to Vietnam. Then, the same stuff comes up. The guy behind me gets orders and then another guy behind me. So, I go to Bob "Rick-a-shay Rabbit" Schultz, he was our XO [executive officer] at that time. I go

to him and I say, "What's up XO?" And he says, "Well, you've got an overseas control date." It was just the same thing. He said, "And we need stability in this squadron." Initially, they made me the S-1 [administration officer] of the squadron. And trying to get in the NATOPS and FAM in an airplane while being the S-1 of a squadron that--those squadrons in those days were getting all the guys coming out of Vietnam were being assigned to those squadrons, so you'd only have them for four or five months, then they'd ship out. They got out of the Marine Corps, most of them. And so, it was just a nightmare of record books and trying to keep up with all of that crap. And, I didn't have any background, or experience, in admin, or anything. I got so sick one time that I just, I felt awfully ill and actually had to go to a doctor, which you refused to do, because it was just late nights and trying to do all of that work, and trying to study, and trying to fly. Finally, I got a break and I think Schultz did me a favor. He came in as the new XO, he understood what was going on, and they assigned me to the S-3 [operations] to be an assistant schedule-writer. I got into writing schedules at that time. Well, a guy named Charlie Quilter, have you ever heard of Charlie Quilter?

Q: Yes, he does a lot of work for the [USMC] History Division; good historian and writer.

General Howell: Charlie was a lieutenant then, he made colonel or something. Charlie was quite a character, but he was an excellent pilot and he flew every chance he got. They had a couple of "bug-smashers" [small propeller-driven aircraft] there. He'd go and he'd fly during the day, and then get in that thing at night and fly it. He was a flying fool. I'll say that for him.

Q: He's flying for the airlines now.

General Howell: Ok, he's a good man, a good pilot; sort of weird, but a good guy.

So, this happens and I had to go in to see the squadron commander and I said, "Sir, I've got to go." And he gave me the same spiel, he said, "Beak, it is war over there. People are getting shot at and killed." He said, "We need you here. You've been overseas." So, I said, "But, I wasn't in combat when I was overseas before!" And I just told him, I said, "Sir, I've got to go. You know, I've got friends over there and I could never look them in the face if this thing is over and I don't serve my time over there and get into that thing." And he just sort of gave me this look and he said, "Well, this is the way it is!" Oh, he also said, "You've got a [wife], isn't your wife pregnant?" Because Janel had gotten pregnant with Jay, and I said, "Well, yes sir!" He said, "Well, when is she due? [condescending tone]" I said, "Well, in April-May timeframe." As I recall this was January-February. He said, "Ok!" He said, "You've got to wait until she has that baby

and then I'll get you in it." And I said, "Ok, I can accept that. That's reasonable, even though I think I ought to go now." I was really a jerk.

Q: In what sense, you mean just pressing to go or because of the family thing?

General Howell: Well, I should have probably been more willing to stay. But, I just really felt compelled to get over there. I just felt like a slacker. So, we get into March and the squadron is getting for another 30 day deployment to Yuma, and lo-and-behold the XO said, "Hey, General Howell. I need to talk to you." He said, "We just got a quota--they want us to send somebody to GCI [ground controlled intercept] school at Glencoe [Georgia] and you're the guy who's going." I said, "Why the hell is this? [whispering]" He said, "Well, you've got more time than any other nugget in the squadron here." I said, "The only reason I've got more time is because YOU KEPT ME HERE! I OUGHT TO BE IN VIETNAM!" [Raspy forceful whisper, yelling while whispering???

He said, "Well, I know. That's just the way it goes." He said, "There is no guarantee that you'll be a GCI controller. This will just be a secondary MOS [military occupational specialty], you know." And that just [anger in voice] I said, "This is a setup I can see it! I know the only reason they give you a quota is because they need GCI controllers in WestPac and sure-as-shineola the minute I get orders over there I'm going to end up in a bubble [slang for air control building, has a bubble roof for better radar receptivity] some place."

So, our first squadron commander was named Frank Topley, and he was quite a character. Then he left, and we got the next fellow, LtCol Roy Seavers, who was a really wonderful man. He was really a nice guy, handsome, a good guy, and a good leader, but he didn't do me any favors. So, I go in and talk to him. I said, "Sir, I don't think it's right that I go to this GCI school." So, he said, "Howell, you've got more time than anybody. It's not fair to anybody else and this quota will fit right with you going [to Vietnam] after your kid is born and it's no guarantee. You'll just have a secondary MOS." And I said, "You know better than that. You know what's going to happen to me. They're looking for a GCI controller, that's the only reason they assigned that quota and I'm screwed. I want to fly Phantoms and I want to fly them in combat. I just don't think this is right." I pissed him off. He said, "Well, that's just the way it is." I said, "Well, I want to request mast with the group commander." He just said, "REALLY! [mockingly sarcastic and irritated tone]" and I said, "Yes sir." I really pissed him off, but he said, "Alright! I'll set it up!"

Colonel [Robert] Lamar was our new group commander and he was a tiny little old man, but I'll love him until the day I die because I went over to see him and it's funny, I go into his

office and he had the admin officer and the S-3 standing [Laughing] at either side of his desk and I walk in there; somebody else is with me and I don't think the skipper went with me. So, he asks, "What's going on here Howell? I understand that they're assigning you to GCI school and you don't want to do that," and I told him my story. I said, "Colonel, you know I'm a former infantry officer. My old battalion is in combat as we speak and I've got to get there in combat and I want to fly jets in combat. I love the Phantom, I can fly that airplane and fly it well, and I think that that's what I ought to be doing and not sitting in a bubble someplace." And he gave me that old "Well, that's no guarantee [Raspy intonation]." I said, "Colonel, you know better than that. You know what's going to happen to me when I get over there. They're looking for a GCI controller and guess who's going to get it." And confides, he said, "You know everybody gets good deals and bad deals in the Marine Corps and this is your deal. I'm going to support the squadron commander, you're going." I said, "Aye-aye." He said, "But, I understand the squadron is deploying over to Yuma and then the [GCI] school starts in three weeks." And so, he said, "Here. I'm going to give you basket leave and just you and your wife, why don't you all just drive on down to Glencoe and enjoy the beach and have a good time down there and then you'll go to school? It's on me, on the Marine Corps, and then you can go to school and you don't have to go out to Yuma." I said, "Sir, I am going to Yuma and I'm going to fly the F-4 until the day before that school starts and I'll pay my own commercial ticket to go to that dag-gone school, but I'm going to fly the Phantom until I'm told that I can't fly it anymore." And I said, "Do you know what really irritates me?" And I was really upset [dramatic]. I started crying. I actually started crying. I said, "Sir, do you know what really BUGS ME? It's that across the street, in those two squadrons, there are at least a half a dozen guys who are just scared shitless of the F-4. They don't want to fly it anymore. They would happily volunteer for this billet if all you did was ask for volunteers because they don't want to fly the F-4." He said, "Tell me! Tell me who! Who doesn't want to fly the Phantom!?! [Angry and shocked intonation]." I said, "I can't tell you that. I would never tell you, but I guarantee you it's the truth and all you've got to do is ask [Pleading intonation]." He said, "Well, this is the way it is. Get out of here! [Short and Impatient Intonation]." So, I said, "Yes sir."

So, I go and the skipper was so pissed off that I didn't get to fly a Phantom out to Yuma. I had to get in the back of a C-130 to go out there, but at least they're putting me on the flight schedule. It was funny, about two weeks into this deployment – you know it's one of these moments that you'll never forget – I've got all my gear hanging over my shoulder and I'm walking out to an airplane at that old visitor's hangar there off at the corner there at Yuma and I'm walking out to that airplane and I hear, "Hey Howell! Howell! [Raspy shouting from far off intonation]."

So, I said, “Yes sir.” And it’s the skipper and he said, “Come here a minute.” So, I run over there and he said, “I just got a call from Colonel Lamar and he said ‘Tell Howell I found a volunteer.’”

Q: [laughing] He took you up on your word there? So, that’s how you got out of it?

General Howell: Yes, and so, I’ll tell you the guy’s name, it was Mike Kehoe, because I met him later. We were instructors together and he was bragging about how he got the good deal.

Q: Did he end up being a controller?

General Howell: Yes, he was there. He was in a bubble almost the whole time.

Q: When was your son born?

General Howell: We were still on the Yuma deployment while one week later I get a call from my mother-in-law, whom Janel had gone to visit. Jay comes a month early. She said, “He’s on his way...GET UP HERE!” So, I had to find my way – in those days it was really hard to get an airline from Yuma, Arizona to Atlanta, Georgia – and it damn near took me 15-16 hours and when I finally got there Jay was already born. I got there about 12 hours late. So Jay was way ahead of his time, when he was only two weeks old he had his first ride in an airliner from Atlanta back to Havelock.

Q: How did you get to Vietnam?

General Howell: I come back home and I get orders to 1st MAW, in-country. And so, here’s the other side of the persistence, I know I’m slowing you down here, but I think this is an interesting story.

Q: Persistence plays a big part in your career, a trend is developing.

General Howell: Yes. I get orders to 1st MAW and I’m going to get to go fly jets and that made me a happy man.

Q: What did you do with the family?

General Howell: I get Janel and our new son, I pack them up, get PCSed [permanent change of station orders] and get them over to Atlanta. She was going to stay with her mother in Atlanta. She lived in Decatur, Georgia which is right outside of Atlanta. Her father [had passed away] and her mother is a widow. So, I get them settled in and while we're there I get a call from Headquarters Marine Corps saying, "Your orders have been modified." And I say, "Well, okay. What's up?" They say, "You're being assigned to..." I want to say it was I MEF [Marine Expeditionary Force] at the time, I think, in Okinawa. It was whatever would have been the MEF in Okinawa at that time. I ought to remember, but it was, "you're being assigned to the MEF."

Q: They called them MAF's [Marine amphibious forces] in those days.

General Howell: Yes, it probably was. I said, "What's up?" They said, "Those are your orders captain! Fulfill them!" So, I end up going to Okinawa and checking in through that awful place that they had, [Camp Hansen] which was sort of a run-through for people coming and going.

Q: Your records indicate you got in VMFA-323, how did that transpire?

General Howell: I go there and then check into the MAF headquarters and they say, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Sir, I was ordered here [quiet disappointed intonation]." He said, "Well, you're an aviator! What are you doing on Okinawa?" So, I said, "Sir, I was ordered here [quiet disappointed tone]." So, he said, "Well! We have an air group up in Iwakuni and we'll assign you up there." So, they assign me at MAG-15, which was in Iwakuni even back then, this was in 1967. I get checked in up there. And this is how it happened, "Well you're a 7522, an F-4 pilot?" I said, "Yes sir." "Well, we have one F-4 squadron here. You know that the F-4 squadrons rotate in-and-out of country [Vietnam] for three months. [VMFA-] 323, the Death-Rattlers, would that be ok with you?" I said, "Sir, that would be fine with me." "Well, they are going back." This was in June as I recall, and he said, "They'll be going back into country [Vietnam] in August. You know that they've only got openings for three more nuggets and I've got orders already on my desk for five nuggets coming in, in the next two months. So, I think that I'll just hold you in the H&MS until we get everybody here and then we'll decide who should go into the squadron." And I said, "Sir, that's not fair because one, you need to have these guys train with the squadron; and two, I'm here and I ought to be able to go and to do it." He said, "Well, that's the way it is. That's tough captain because we need people in Headquarters." I said, "Aye sir. I want to request mast with the

group commander.” [Laughing] I did it again. He said, “WHAT!” and I said, “I want to request mast with the group commander. This is not right. You’re not doing me right.” He said, “WAIT A MINUTE [extremely snotty and curt intonation]!!!” So, he walks out and storms out then comes back in and says, “Ok, 323.”

Q: Who was in that squadron?

General Howell: I think Herron was the name of the skipper, but they had [Lee T.] “Bear” Lasseter and Kevin O’Mara. It was a GREAT squadron. They were like everybody else who deployed out of country: half of their airplanes are down, and they’re being stripped down, and traded, and upgraded, and all that kind of stuff. But, they’re flying and I started flying again. I got a FAM hop. Neal Patrick was in the squadron. So, I started flying with them and get to one of the neatest moments at that period for me. It was to be down with the detachment down in Okinawa at Naha. It used to be, they had a naval [flight] line down at the Naha Air Force Base, which is now Naha airport, but it was an Air Force base at the time. They had a Navy line there and that’s where we were deployed, and we did a lot of air-to-ground out on Ie Shima and all those little islands, you know target islands, off of Okinawa. We did a lot of bombing out there. I got to fly on Lasseter’s wing and he was just a great leader and a great aviator. He used to, with a four plane hop, after you made your last run he’d get everybody together and he’d say, “Okay, let’s see, how much gas? Check the fuel. Now, let’s do a tail chase.” Then, he’d get everybody in a string and off we’d go, to do some great stuff. Then, when the first guy called, “Bingo!,” he’d say, “Okay, come up. Join in parade.” And he would keep the thing going. You would have to loop, you know come up and rendezvous, and get in on his wing in a loop or a barrel roll or whatever. I mean he just kept it going and you didn’t have any hair if you didn’t do it and you didn’t get aboard. That was just exciting stuff! A lot of pride, you know? And probably illegal as hell, but it was good stuff. Well, we get back from that deployment. As a matter of fact, we get cut short because of typhoons coming in.

Q: How did you get to Vietnam?

General Howell: We end up getting back up to Iwakuni and, then lo and behold the skipper walks in and says, “They’re really hurting for pilots and RIO’s in country, who would like to volunteer to go down there and be TDY until the squadron comes down and then you can get back into the squadron?” So, I said, “Take me.” So, myself and about four other guys including: Jim Ballard,

who was a RIO, and Harry Lee, who was a great guy, he went. Maybe I was the only pilot, the three of us, we end up getting on C-130's and you know Okinawa, and then down to Clark [AFB], and then--I mean it was one of these 36 to 72 hour kind of trips and we end up finally getting into Chu Lai, where the air group was.

Q: What group was that?

General Howell: MAG-13 and they had [VMFAs] 542, 115, 314, and maybe one other squadron there, or maybe that was it.

Q: Did you have your section-lead qualification before coming out?

General Howell: Oh, yes. I think I had everything.

Q: Of course, they didn't have anything like ACTI's [air combat tactics instructor] and MAWTS [Marine aviation weapons and tactics squadron], and all-- that was way off in the future wasn't it?

General Howell: If the stan [standardization] officer or the Ops officer thought you were ready, they'd assign you.

Q: You had mentioned something about push back from flying Phantoms in those days because it was a two seat aircraft. Did that take some getting used to, the crew coordination and all?

General Howell: No, I fell in love with the airplane and actually the RIO's were so good, that I flew with initially, the Phantom was a two-person airplane, with the radar, running the radar and all that, the airplane could just not function properly without two people.

Q: The tasks were divided up. I remember the RIO did the comm, helped out with the navigation, and then did the weapons stuff, the weapons system radar and stuff. It was like that then, too?

General Howell: Yes, that's the way it was from the get-go. Now, a lot guys, a lot of pilots, demanded that they maintain the comm. The way I always did it in combat was that the back-seater had the admin comm, but when we got into any kind of a hostile environment, either around a target or if we were in ACM, I would take the comm. It got real hot and heavy, and so you

needed to do that. And so, that was sort of the way that I always worked it, but guys had their own routines of doing that.

Q: So, what happened when you get to Chu Lai?

General Howell: I got down there and I check in with [VMFA-] 314, and I have never had them on my record because I was just TDY to them. I never really officially joined the squadron, but they were the guys that FAM-ed me in-country. So, I'm actually flying with 314, really a wonderful squadron with great guys.

Q: The "Black Knights."

General Howell: I hadn't been there three weeks or two weeks, I don't know how long I was there, and lo and behold I get, "Report to the group!" And I go in there and they say, "You've got PCS orders. You've got to report back to Iwakuni right away. You have PCS orders out of Iwakuni." I said, "Where to?" And he said, "We don't know." It just said, "You must report back right away. You have PCS orders." And I don't know if something is wrong at home or what is going on. So I have to find my way back on these C-130's without really any orders, and you know hook a ride and work my way back up. Finally, I get back up to Iwakuni on the old C-130 thing. Walk in there, it's funny, I walk into Major Lasseter's, you know he was the 3 of the squadron, walk into his office with a big smile and I said, "Hey 'Maj' what's up?" He looked at me, I mean just grinning, he said, "You dirty son-of-a-bitch!" And I said, "Sir?" He said, "How did you arrange this?" They gave me PCS orders from that MAF to 1st MAW and the thing was that they didn't know that I was in-country. I could have just stayed there because I had PCS orders.

I had to go through the whole thing of checking out and PCS-ing. One thing I took advantage of was that I went out in town with a bunch of money and bought a lot of stuff and then shipped it to Janel. It was stuff that she wanted. She had given me a list of screens and all this kind of stuff, and I bought it and shipped it on my PCS orders because they were PCS orders. Then, I go through that same trek all the way back down to Da Nang now, to report in to the Wing. And it was another Headquarters trade. The MAF needed a GCI controller, and Howell wasn't qualified. And so, they looked and they said, "Who?" I guess 1st MAW had a guy coming out to be the GCI controller and they said, "Well, if you're going, we're going to take the 1st MAW guy and send him to you. Now you've got to give up somebody and send them to us." They said, "Who is the last guy who was there?" "Oh, Howell. We'll send you Howell." And they didn't

know I was down there. They thought I was up in Iwakuni. So, I went through that whole drill. Check in and get back down there, you know doing the old C-130 thing. At least, thank God I had some missions under my belt! And I walk in there, and I'll never forget, the G-1 of the Wing, "May I check in, sir? Captain Howell reporting as ordered." He said, "What's with you?" And we were talking about what I had been doing, he said, "Well?" I said, "Sir, I'm ready to go down to Chu Lai and get back with 314 flying down there." He said, "Well, we are really hurting for some people up here. We need some people on this wing staff and you know with your background and you're..."

Q: [Laughing] An Infantry Officer stuff [phonetic].

General Howell: Yes, that same stuff. I said, "Sir, give me a F U C K I N G break! [long drawn out, pleading and whispered] You don't do this to me!" I said, "I'm already flying, you know? I'm already qualified and they need pilots down there." I said, "Please! Help me out on this thing!" He looked at me and he said, "Okay asshole! You're going down to the group! [spoken with rather plain yet sarcastic intonation]." And then, so I go down there, just to finish this story to tell, you talk about persistence, I go down to flight ops. Da Nang in those days, the ocean side of the runway was Air Force and they had their own terminal and everything, a really nice O-Club and all that stuff. The mountain side was the Marines and they had their own terminal. You had these thousands of young Marines coming and going. They had a bunch of tents parked by the flight line, with all that noise, with cots and that's it!

Q: Whereas the Air Force was living in a nice brick Taj Mahal and everything.

General Howell: Oh yes, yes. This was just for the people waiting in transit, you know. Everybody coming-and-going into I Corps went through Da Nang and it was a mess! There were just a bunch of muddy, filthy Marines sitting around with nothing to do, no recreation, and no water. You had to walk for a mile to find some water to drink! So, I go and get in this queue with a bunch of other Marines from private up to Captain Howell. I get my turn up to the dispatcher, this very tired and bored corporal or sergeant and who had this long legal pad with words crossed out and put in. I said, "My name is Howell and I'm trying to get down to Chu Lai. I'm on orders." Then, I showed him a copy of my orders that said, "Howell." Then, he said, "Well, ok sir. We'll get you a ride down there." I said, "When can I go." He said, "It'll probably be three days before I can get you a ride down there." I said, "Where am I staying [worriedly]?" He said, "uh, pick a

hooch, you know? Join the party.”

Q: Just find a cot....

General Howell: Yes! And sit on your ass in the mud! And so, I said, “Ok, thank you corporal.” So, I take all my gear, and of course you’ve got a bag with all of your flight gear, and then you’ve got your sea bag with all of your utilities and everything. Of course, aviators carried twice as much because of that damned flight gear. I haul all that stuff and I go out on the flight line and there’s all kinds of C-130’s and C-47’s. The Navy was flying C-47’s there at that time. There’s airplanes cranking up and coming, and taxiing, and coming and going. So, I take my gear and just stick it over in a place by the flight line. Then, I go walking down the line asking guys, “Where are you going?” And lo-and-behold here’s a C-47 cranking up, a U.S. Navy C-47 from some squadron someplace. So, I holler and I wave at the pilot and he opens the window and I think I said, “Where are you going [screaming]?” He said, “Well, a lot of places! We’re going to Chu Lai first [screaming].” So, I said, “Can I go with you [screaming]?” So, he says, “Wait a minute.” So, he sticks his head back in and then comes back out. He said, “Okay, c’mon!” I said, “I’ve got to get my gear [screaming]!” He said, “I’ve got to go you better hurry [screaming]!” So, man I ran down that flight line and pick up that gear, then haul it up there. By that time, they’d got the hatch open and the big old Navy chief just grabbed my ass and pulled me in, and the aft of that plane was just chock full of SHIT-- people and stuff. He said, “C’mon captain, you can take my seat.” And he pulled me up there and put me in a jump seat behind the pilot and the co-pilot. He just stuffed my gear on top of something close. He said, “Don’t worry about me I’ll be alright.” And then he stood the whole time while we went down to Chu Lai. That’s how I got down to Chu Lai.

I checked in and I got assigned to [VMFA] 542, and the deal is: “You’ll be with 542 until 323 gets in country and then you’ll move over to 323.” I said, “That’s fine. That’ll be perfect.” So, that’s the way it started.

Q: What were the living conditions like, at Chu Lai? You had rocket attacks, too?

General Howell: Oh yes, on a regular basis, but it was great! Really! Chu Lai had sort of two sides. It had the ocean side and then it had the fighter side. Their initial runway was a metal strip, and they still used it. It sort of divided the original base. You had the ocean side of the metal strip, and then you had the other side, the landward side and that’s where MAG-13 was, on the landward side. But, in the interim they’d built a big 9,000 foot concrete runway that sort of paralleled, not

quite, but almost paralleled that metal strip on the landward side of MAG-13. So, it was sort of two different worlds. The A-4's and A-6's were on the ocean side, and then all the Phantom guys were on the landward side of that metal strip. We didn't spend a lot of time together except when we would drive around the runways to go to the beach or something, which wasn't very often, but that happened from time to time. That was sort of our world. MAG-13 had it's own club there, and we were sort of on a rise. But, the whole area, and my greatest memory is that that whole thing was a big sand pit. The whole base was built on a mound of sand. Sand everywhere! And when you walked anywhere you were up to your ankles in sand. It had been a big wash, from the ocean I guess, and so everything, everywhere you walked in your cantonment, where you lived or to the mess hall and everything, had pallet walkways. So, you were walking on pallets almost everywhere because the sand was just so soft, and so deep, that that was the only way that you could navigate, you could get around. The hooches were Southeast Asian hooches. They were hardback tents with a wooden floor. Up on the sides had wood with a tent over the top, then it rolled up and you had screens. They were screened in on the sides. Little by little, they ended up with tin roofs on them.

Q: No air conditioning though?

General Howell: Oh no; not at all, and it was wide-open. You had water piped through there, so you could take showers. If you planned it right, if you took a shower around about 1300 hours or so it was a nice hot shower. If you took it later in the day it would be damn hot, and then in the morning it would be freezing, you know it would be cold. So, the water was heated by the sun.

Q: The squadron moved from Chu Lai to Da Nang later on?

General Howell: Yes, but when I first [got there] we were at Chu Lai. You know you had your "Officers Country," and you had "the Enlisted," and they lived a little bit closer to the flight line. But, it was continuous ops. Here we go, [showing Dr. Allison a picture of Chu Lai], yes that will give you a good look at it. That shows the hangar with the flight line. Of course, we're...well that shows some stuff...yeah that's just country out there. That's some rice paddies. So, we all lived on this side. I was hoping to have sort of a bigger overview of Chu Lai. But, that gives you a visual of what things looked like. Revetments were open down there, you know after Tet I think they finally realized that they needed to cover those things because they lost a lot of birds during Tet, in the heavy attacks they suffered. This is "Lake Robertshaw." That was a pond, that was

right in the middle of our Officer's Country. And on that side, that was for field grade officers, and then all of us lived on this side, over here. The mess hall was closer to them, and so you're walking on pallets all the way through there, but you see all that sand. We had an old goose and some ganders living there, and that poor goose, he was harassed continuously. Every time we'd catch him we'd do a carrier launch and launch him, throw him, at the pond. But he was a beggar. So, he would beg and we'd have some food, then you'd grab him and launch him--we were awful, but it was a great squadron.

Q: What was 542 like at that time and place?

General Howell: I started flying with them and got into being an assistant schedules writer there. John Hubner was our CO, he was a major. He had just taken over the squadron from a guy named, [Frederick L] I think "Kenny" Farrell, who had just gone home. People loved him, he was a great skipper, but Hubner was a major and we just all loved him. He was an excellent pilot, great leader, and the morale was just sky-high in that squadron. [Harvey] "Harv" Bradshaw later became a group commander, he was the maintenance officer, and a lot of legends in the Marine Corps came through before and after me.

Q: What type of flying were you doing?

General Howell: It was just really great flying. The normal routine for us was to fly a day mission everyday and you'd fly a night mission every other night. That was seven days a week, so a lot of flying.

Q: In addition to flying a day mission, then you'd fly a night mission also?

General Howell: Yes.

Q: So, you'd fly twice every other day.

General Howell: Every other day. So, then we also had a "hot pad" too. Sometimes you would have to "man the pad." Then sometimes, you'd usually be on the pad for six hours, you might get two or three "hot pad" launches during that timeframe. Scramble.

Q: For a CAS mission?

General Howell: They're all CAS. Almost everything we did was close air support. Out of a day FRAG was 15 to 25 missions over a 24 hour period, and that was just continuous.

Q: What was the routine for scheduling?

General Howell: We would get the FRAG usually after chow, at about 1900 or 2000. So, that's when the schedule's writers went to work. That's what I was doing. So, we'd write the schedule between nine [pm] and midnight, and we'd try to get it out by 11 [pm], but sometimes, trying to match it all up. There'd be a couple of mission during the day called "Tally-Ho Missions," which went into Laos and to the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Periodically, we'd have a couple of missions go up north of the DMZ hitting targets, but they were air-to-ground kind of missions?

Q: Interdiction?

General Howell: Interdiction kind of things. Yes, but just about everything we did was close air support during the daytime; working mostly with snake-eye. We used 250 pound snake-eyes, because we were working so close to the troops, and a lot of napalm. We dropped a lot of napalm, and shot a lot of rockets, both 2.75" and 3.5" Zuni. So, we'd shoot a lot of rockets, and bomb, it was great flying.

Q: What type of tactics did you use for CAS?

General Howell: In close air support, because the enemy was lightly armed, if you were up there with a hot target and troops in contact, and you had eight bombs, you'd probably make eight runs and drop one bomb per run. You would just get in a circle. I came back several times with holes in my airplane.

Q: Really, how serious, what type of enemy fire—7.62 [small arms]?

General Howell: Yes, usually in the tail because we were going real fast. So, they were just trying their best to get us. We had a couple of airplanes shot down, but that was very rare. I'd only been there about a month and we lost an airplane that had an engine failure on takeoff. It was fully

loaded with bombs and it had a brand-new pilot, in that he was brand-new for Chu Lai, and he just tried to make a turn with a single-engine with a loaded-airplane. He didn't jettison his bombs and the thing just stalled out on him and just exploded...SPEEEWW [mimicking noise of explosion]. It had one of the best RIO's in the Marine Corps got killed that day.

Q: Was that David Spearman, and Major Ray Pendergraft being killed.

General Howell: That was before I got there. Ray got killed about two months before I got there.

Q: Oh, Glenn Jackson, Fred McGeary?

General Howell: Yes, McGeary was the guy's name. But yes, Jackson was a brand-new--I don't think he'd had five missions. He was a major, but he was really new to the squadron. I hardly new him at all.

Q: But, McGeary was really a good RIO?

General Howell: McGeary was one of the "Old Corps," former-enlisted, former-warrant officers, and just a great guy. I had to inventory his stuff to send it home and that was really no fun.

Q: I notice that the RIO wings were different there.

General Howell: Yes, that was the old NFO, Naval Flight Officer wings, and so they changed them, for good purpose. But, the squadron was really out flying everybody in the group. I just got into a great outfit: good people, good airplanes, good machines, great reputation. The FAC's [Forward Air Controllers] loved us. "Caster Oil" was the call sign for us at that time, and they loved when "Caster Oil" would check in, and they were tough. When I first got into that squadron, they said, "Howell, we know that you've flown down here before, but you're going to have to prove that you can hit a target before we will let you fly close to troops." So, you'd have to go out on some direct air support missions, you know they were hitting hard-targets and that kind of stuff and be graded by your section leads before they'd let you fly close air support. A lot of pride, a lot of pride, and Hubner was just a great leader. Everybody loved him. He always picked the toughest missions for himself and everybody wanted to fly with him.

Q: Anything else from that tour, didn't you get a new CO?

General Howell: Yes. So, that went on through that summer and into the fall and here comes the monsoons. Right about that time, Hubner is leaving, you know it's time for him to go home, and that's when we got in new leadership. [Richard C.] Marsh, he was an 80-hour wonder and had never flown the F-4 before. He had been up at Headquarters for three years and then just went through a FAM at Cherry Point, I think, and came out there. The guy was a nice guy, but was very uncomfortable in the airplane, but wouldn't admit it. He tried to take over where Hubner left off, and tried to lead the tough missions, and all that. He scared the hell out of a bunch of RIO's, pissed off some FAC's by getting in the wrong places.

Q: What was the procedure for a routine mission, as far as command and control?

General Howell: Flying a mission over there, you checked in and out of controllers--you would get out of Da Nang, leave tower and check in with your over-arching [controller] -- whoever controlled the area -- then they'd assign you to a segment, to a TAOC [tactical air operations center]. Then, you'd fly over and overhead check in with them, and then they'd assign you to either a smaller TAOC or to a FAC. Then, you'd go and check in with your FAC, and they were checking and checking, all that kind of stuff: reading off your ordnance, telling them how much time you'd had on target, all that stuff. Of course, the further away from home, the less time you had. So, some targets you were just 50 miles away and sometimes they were 250 miles or 300 miles away. So, it depended. I didn't ever hit a tanker [in-flight refueling] while I was there.

Q: What about tanking on other type missions?

General Howell: Yes, some guys did tank from time-to-time at night. They always had a CAP [combat air patrol] up north of Da Nang just in case they tried something tricky with a raid, you know. So, periodically we had to furnish a couple of CAP birds for air-to-air, and they would go up and tank and stay up there forever. Of course, after not tanking at all and then going up there and trying to do a night tank; that was tough.

Q: Night tanking-- I bet that was tough.

General Howell: Night tanking. The Da Nang squadrons got that more than us, because they were

further north. But, periodically Chu Lai would have to furnish a CAP section. I think I flew that one time down there. Then, later at Da Nang I had to fly it a couple of times. But, it was just great flying. I loved it. It was just great flying, EXCITING! I was flying with great guys. Once Marsh took over, the whole thing started coming apart because the guy did not--it's the old leadership principle of: "Know yourself and seek self-improvement." He just didn't understand that. Instead of working his way in, he just took over, and he wasn't really prepared. So, morale got bad. I actually had some RIO's and the schedule officer come up to me and say, "If you assign me with him again, I'll kill you!" I mean they were dead serious. Everybody packed a gun back then, and you had guys like "The Hostile Wop" Vic Russillio

Q: "The Hostile Wop?"

General Howell: Yes, he was a tough guy. He and I were in this squadron, and later on in VMFA-115, when I went back. He is quite a guy, a great guy.

Q: So, they were actually threatening you, that's when being a schedule writer could be a tough job.

General Howell: We had one of the older guy's named Estes, he used to say, "I'll fly with him [carefree southern-accent]." They would take off, and they wouldn't be 50 miles out and he'd have to come up on the ICS [inter-cockpit communications system], he'd say, "Skipper, we had a radio failure. We're going to have to go back." Estes would just turn off the radios, and just tell him that they'd had a radio failure. Marsh never figured that out [laughing], and he'd come back and chew out the damn maintenance officer, "God-damn, that's the fifth radio failure I've had in two weeks. I'm sick and tired of that shit!" And Estes would be sitting there with a big smile on his face. It was really bad, but at the same time the squadron was getting ready to rotate out.

Q: You mentioned the monsoons, how did that affect flying?

General Howell: That November we were going to go, and these monsoons were coming in and the flying was getting tough, and trying to get to a target was awful. We started doing a lot of TPQ-10 radar bombing.

Q: Bombing through the clouds.

General Howell: Yes, which is something that we did every night anyways. A lot of the bombing we did at night was TPQ-10. So, you did a lot of straight and level, “Mark, mark, mark” kind of bombing. I’m not sure how effective it was. They seemed to think it was, so we did a lot of that stuff at night. Then, when the monsoons came in, it was really tough getting it down under that stuff.

Q: What were those missions like?

General Howell: There were times when--one of these sterling moments that you’ll never forget: one o’clock in the morning, just raining like CRAP!, you can’t see your hand in front of your face, got the TPQ-10 launch, it’s single ship though, thank God we didn’t go out in sections in those things, at night you go single ship. You’d go out and go through an intelligence briefing for every mission telling you what the situation was and all that and then, “Here’s where you’re going,” and, “this is what’s going on over there,” and then you’d get a weather briefing. Then, you’d go through the regular--over at the group headquarters was where they had all the big briefings. Then, you’d brief your hop back at your place. Then, you’d go down to the line. The first thing you’d do when you crank up, check-in with ground [control], “We’re starting engines.” They said, “Roger that. Field is closed for weather,” and, “Roger that.” And then you’d say, you’d request to taxi, “Roger. Clear to taxi, runway so-and-so, the field is closed.” And you taxied out to the other runway, get everything ready, and said, “Request permission to take the runway.” “Roger. Clear to take the runway, the field is closed.” Then, you’d get off, do your run-ups and say, “We’re ready for take-off.” “Roger that. Chu Lai is open. You are clear for take-off.” I mean the minute they would see you lifting your gear they would say, “The field is closed.” I mean it was closed. It was just zero-zero, and you’re taking off in that shit. You go up and you’d come back. If it [the weather] was still that way you would have to bingo over to Thailand, over to Ubon or one of those places, and spend the night. A lot of guys loved that because you’d get a hot shower.

Q: I was going to say—that might be a good deal.

General Howell: I never got to do that. It’s funny, every time I’d go, when I’d come back well it would be 300 and a half or something [clouds 300 feet above the ground and ½ mile visibility], and I come in, in that crap and barely find the runway.

Q: Did they have a GCA [ground controlled approach—precision approach] approach for you then?

General Howell: Oh yes, big time GCA. They're very good. Usually arrest on a wet runway, make a wet one-way arrest.

Q: M-28 [phonetic], short-field gear?

General Howell: I think they had two of them. Three-quarters on either end there. So, you actually had two, and then you had abort gear on each end, too. It was M-21 gear.

Q: Wasn't the future General, Paul Fratarangelo in VMFA-542 with you?

General Howell: He was a RIO at that time; a seasoned guy. He left while we were still in country there, to go home, but I had one mission with him. At that time, the middle cement runway was made out of some low grade cement, and because of arrested landings, and hooks, the middle of it was crumbling and everything. So, they basically closed it for awhile, and they cut out about a three foot section down the middle and repaved that. While they were doing that we had to use either the metal strip or they had dual crosswind 2,000 foot Morest strips, or SAT strips that connected those two runways together. They strung three either M-15 or M-21 gear across them. So, what we did was we took off on the taxiway and then came around and we'd arrest on the 2,000 foot strip. One very busy afternoon, I'm with "Frat" [Fratarangelo], we go up and hit a target. We had a good successful flight and we come back and there's a string of --in those days because of the way it was you didn't come into a break because of this special deal. You had to sort of get them to align behind a lot of other airplanes and sort of circle and come down.

There were about three or four planes ahead of us and so we were checking our fuel and doing okay. The first airplane gets down and rips out the first gear. The second plane rips out the second gear. We come up and they say, "There is no more arresting gear and you can't land on the other thing." So, I said, "Roger. Request permission to land on the taxiway," and they said, "Roger that." That's the only thing left. So, we come around and we're going to land opposite of the way that they're taking off, on the taxiway, and come in on that thing. But I'm lining up on this thing and I come down and touch down and you know 'chute out. And right at that time--WHAM! I'd had my hook down for the short runway and I forgot to raise it.

Q: Oh, no.

General Howell: We caught the abort gear on the taxiway [laughing]. It just surprised the shit of us. So, they had put E-28 abort gear on it, for the taxiway, on the end of it for aborted takeoffs. And I hit that thing and arrested on it. It just surprised the hell out of me. Thank God it was two-way gear. Thank God! They had a crew down there, but the tower went nuts! “They took the gear! They took the gear! Chu Lai is closed! We have no runways [frantically]!” And I’m thinking, “Holy shit! I’m going to be grounded. The skipper is going to have my ass [worriedly].” Frat is just pissed off, upset, and he is mad at himself because both of us forgot. You know, we had gone through the drill.

Q: You’d gone through the checklist?

General Howell: Yes, lowered the hook, and all that stuff, and both of us forgot to raise the damn hook because we’re working. But, ended up, it got back in battery, because there was a crew down there and they just put it back in. The thing was back in battery in 15 minutes but the tower didn’t know anything. We really caught--I mean we got razzed about that for a long time.

Q: What did the skipper have to say about it?

General Howell: The skipper laughed and said, “So be it.”

Q: You were talking about morale getting bad, because of the CO. How did that come out among the pilots?

General Howell: Well, you find out that it just trickles down. Everybody starts getting down, and people start arguing with each other and fighting with each other. People start telling stories about the heavies [senior officers, squadron leaders]. You become cynical and almost disloyal because you don’t believe in them anymore. It’s really sad, and the only saving grace really was that the squadron was getting ready to roll out of there to Iwakuni. And so, you did have this excitement about we’re getting out of country for three months and going to Japan, a new thing, and so a new beginning.

And, the way they would do that at Chu Lai, the squadron that was leaving would get a lot of transfers and a lot of guys who were still in squadron who had six or seven months to go, they’d

get transferred over to another squadron if they volunteered. Then, a lot of guys in other squadrons who were getting ready to go home, in a month, would transfer into the squadron and go to Japan with you. That made it easier to get them out of there and go home. And you'd get a lot of newbies [new pilots and RIOs] would come in, in Japan, to re-FAM with the squadron to go back in.

Q: They weren't part of that old environment.

General Howell: No, no. So there was hope, and there's new blood and new faces, but it just wasn't the same. People were upset, and the monsoons didn't help because the weather was crap; never could get a hot shower because there was no sun, and so the water was cold. Even then with the temperature never got below 68 degrees, probably. You just ended up freezing to death. I mean bundling up and trying to stay warm, and dry, because it was wet. Everything was just wet and moist. It was just pretty pitiful.

During the day, its funny this stuff would sort of lift up during the day and you'd have a low ceiling, you know? It could get up to 800 to 1,000 feet. But then, you fly through goo [clouds] for 10,000 to 15,000 feet before you would pop up above it. But, it was always there, and then at night it would come back in and then you had rain, off and on, off and on. Then, in daytime maybe not as much, it seemed like it always rained all night long. It was just continuous.

Q: What if you had a CAS mission, troops needed help?

General Howell: We were trying. We'd FRAG for it, we'd launch, you'd go out over the ocean on a TACAN. In those days all you had was a TACAN. The old air data [navigation] computers in the F-4 never worked worth a flip. So, you knew that you were over the water and you'd keep dropping down and you'd give yourself your own minimums, and we would say, "If you're still at 500 feet and you can see underneath," then you'd turn in toward the beach and see if it would hold, you know pick up a little bit. And you'd have to judge it yourself because, of course, the terrain would start rising on you. But, you'd try to get yourself into an area, where you're trying to go, so you could work in, and the FAC's would let you know, too. In the area they'd say, "What does it look like?" And the guy would say, "Well, I've got about 1,000 feet. If you can get in here, we can work." Because if you've got nape and snakes you can work it at that low of an altitude. It was really hairy, exciting. I worked a couple of missions like that up around Quang Tri and up north of Hue, Phu Bai, in that area, and close to the coast. You know, we'd get it there and just be

“wheeling and dealing,” 400 or 500 knots at about 800 feet--just making almost flat runs.

Q: No wonder you got shot at a lot, though.

General Howell: Oh, yes; but those missions were exciting.

Q: Sounds like command and control was pretty good? You’d just stay within the Marine Corps system at that time, no checking in with the Air Force?

General Howell: Yes, it was excellent. We were very proud of the whole thing, and we thought that it worked great. The Marine Corps, at a higher level, was under a lot of fire. The Air Force wanted to take over I Corps. There was a big wrestling match going on between the Marine Corps and the Air Force. The Air Force wanted to take control over all of it, and the Marine Corps resisted. That was above our pay grade, but we knew that it was going on.

Q: You were aware of it?

General Howell: Yes, we knew it was going on, but we were just very pleased with the way things were.

Q: It kind of came to a head in January, 1968 when you were in Iwakuni.

General Howell: Yes, after Tet.

Q: I was going to ask you about that, when you came back had things changed?

General Howell: It was different, a whole new ballgame.

Q: The Air Force had taken over?

General Howell: Yes, and we said, “Oh, man! This will never work.” And we got right into it. It wasn’t that big of a deal. It was just a different way. You always ended up with a FAC, it was the same. You know, once you got there it was just the command and control of getting to it.

Q: I had read somewhere that Marine aviators even refused to, or pretended to have some sort of NORDO [no radio] situation, where they wouldn't even talk to the Air Force controllers until they got to a Marine controller. Then, all of the sudden, their radios would start working.

General Howell: I'm sure that some of those stories are true, and that some of them are exaggerated. By the time we got back in they had worked a lot of that out.

Q: When you went back to Iwakuni, weren't you supposed to go to VMFA-323?

General Howell: I'll tell you, I was going to stay [in Vietnam] and join 323, when they came in. They came in, we had about a three-week turnover and I got with those guys, and I said, "Hey, I'm ready to go." And Lasseter pulled me aside, he said, "I've got to warn you. We've got a FAC quota coming up, and since the skipper knows these other guys and doesn't know you..." I said, "Is there any guarantee that you can give me that you won't send me to FAC?" I said, "Here's the deal, I don't want to be a slacker in that regard, but, you know, I was a grunt! I've already done the grunt thing for three years. I'm way behind a lot of my contemporaries on flight time. I want to keep flying." And my skipper, both Hubner and then Marsh, both of them came up to me and said, "Hey, you're a key player in this squadron. You're one of the savvy guys. We'd like you to stay in the squadron. It's up to you. If you want to go to 323 that's okay, but we'd like for you to stay in 542 if you will; and help us get back into country when we come back in." So, after doing that I went to Lasseter, "Bear" and I said, "Bear, if you can't guarantee me not going FAC, then I think I'm going to stay in 542." He said, "That's fine, I understand." So, I stayed in 542.

Q: So Bear got over being mad at you.

General Howell: Well, he did. Even while I was up there, when he realized that I didn't know anything about it. He thought that I'd worked some damn deal, and then finally when he realized-- it didn't take an hour--and finally I convinced him, "I didn't know what the hell you were talking about!" I said, "If I would have known this, I would have just stayed and said, 'Send me my orders'".

Q: So you go back to Iwakuni...

General Howell: That's the way that that worked, but we left. I called my wife and she brought

our baby out there.

Q: Oh, really. How did that work?

General Howell: Wives at that time were only allowed 60 days, and then they had to go back home. Man, they clocked them in and clock them out, and some guys got in trouble for trying to get through that. But, Janel brought Jay and we lived out in town, right by the railroad tracks there at Iwakuni. We were getting ready to go on a deployment down to Cubi Point, for an air-to-ground, to get ready to go back into country. Then, the [USS] *Pueblo* incident came up. You know, the [North] Koreans captured the *Pueblo* and then lo-and-behold, all of the sudden we were on a hotpad in Iwakuni, getting ready to go to war with [North] Korea. So, they froze us up there, and kept us up there.

Q: Longer than you normally would have?

General Howell: Way longer, because you ended up spending an extra month up in Iwakuni through January-February. All the sudden Tet comes, and those guys get hammered. We should have been back down there by then, but we were in Iwakuni. Finally, the *Pueblo* sort of becomes a stalemate. It doesn't blow over, but it's a stalemate. We realize that we are not going to go to war with them, and they finally give up a deployment down to Cubi, to do some air-to-ground that spring. We didn't really even get back into country, I don't think, until May. I think it was May.

Q: That's right, it was May. The tenth of May.

General Howell: So, it was five months, almost six months, we were out of country. We had a Cubi deployment. That was fun.

Q: Any changes in the squadron during that time?

General Howell: The squadron has really changed. Marsh, sort of goes away, and the old XO, [Robert N.] Hutchinson, becomes the CO. He is not Hubner, but he is a good guy and he's trying, and he understands his own limitations. Hutchinson, really came to the young guys, he said, "Hey, I haven't been here, but you have. Help me out. Give me some good advice, and let's work this out." So, he was a good skipper.

Q: Well, he had been the XO though, why didn't he understand?

General Howell: Yes, he had been. Well, he saw what was going on. He saw the morale problems.

Q: But, he wasn't aware of it already when he takes over as CO?

General Howell: Well, I think he sensed it. He could sense what was going on.

Q: How did he deal with it?

General Howell: It was nothing formal. It was more on an individual basis and he asked, "What would you do here? I need your help. How about you help me?" You know, it was that kind of stuff. No, formal thing took place. But, we had a couple of other really fine people come in there: Bill McFall, became the aircraft maintenance officer, great guy, great leader; we had the Ops O [Leroy I] Blankenship, the guy had this huge rear-end [whispered], and so it's funny. Marsh was from the northeast and he sort of talked like this [Texan version of uptight northeastern accent while mumbling] and Hutchinson was just sort of happy-go-lucky and he would sort of bumble through things; and then you had the Ops guy who had this big ass, and so, we called them: "Mumbles, Jumbles, and Bubble-Butt." That was the name that all the junior officers gave these guys. They were nice guys, but we were pretty awful. So, I got my call sign in that squadron.

Q: Ok, what's the story there?

General Howell: Beak. When I checked in, Hubner, in the first AOM [all officers meeting], said, "Okay, all of them new guys stand up." And three or four of us stood up. He said, "Okay, Howell. Everybody in the squadron has a call sign because when we're out on missions you get a different mission number everyday. We want you to have a call sign so we know who is talking." And so, I said, "Well, you know, I'm from Texas and so I'd like to be called 'Tex.' 'Tex Howell.'" And a guy in the back, from New York City named Mike Ford, I'll never forget it as long as I live. He was a pilot and became a good buddy. He went to the University of Virginia, but he was from Brooklyn [sarcastically]. He said, "Tex, hell, look at that nose! Let's call him BEAK!" And everybody went "YEAAAAHHHHH [extreme cheering]!" And so, that's how I became Beak.

Q: [Laughing] Ever since.

General Howell: [James P.] “Pat” Faulkner was another great guy that was in that squadron, another great leader. He later on became a skipper of an A-6 squadron. The squadron really was loaded with a lot of talent.

Some of the great ones left, and good ones came in, and the squadron carried on. Got a new leader, it’s funny we had one new ops officer who came in. You see, “Bubble-Butt” became the XO, and so we got a new ops officer who was really a great guy. We deployed down to Cubi and we got real close. I was the flight officer for the squadron, sort of the senior captain, and sort of helped him run flight ops. He came up to me one day, and I’ll never forget this as long as I live, he said, “Beak, I’d like to talk to you.” I said, “Yes sir.” He said, “I just turned in my wings. I decided not to fly anymore.” He said, “I called my wife and I’ve been struggling with this.” You would never have known it. The guy was a great pilot and a good guy, and leader, but he said, “I’m not honest if I try to keep flying, because I just don’t want to fly anymore. I just wanted to let you know.” So, he ended having a GCI squadron in Hawaii when I guess I got out there for 212, he was still out there and getting ready to retire.

Q: Maybe in a war you would hear about that more.

General Howell: But, that was quite a surprise. But, I always respected him because he had the guts to do it. You know, sometimes I think it’s harder to do that than it is to just keep going.

Q: Yes, muddle through.

General Howell: Yes, and so, that was a new experience.

Q: On your deployment to Cubi Point, anything of note come out of that, was that good training?

General Howell: An interesting “sea story”-- out there in a late afternoon, a section doing bombing, you know we were on an air-to-ground deployment, getting ready to go back into Vietnam, and the skipper is in Japan with about half of the squadron and the rest of us were down flying, and I’ve got a section, the last section of the day, on a Friday afternoon. Hitting one of those targets, those rocks, that were outside of Subic. In the high tide they are hardly there, and in

low tide they are there kind of thin. And we're using Mark-76's, we had just bingo'ed and we're getting ready to come in, and here is this beautiful formation of five mini-destroyers, they were "corvettes," as I recall, in a perfect formation going into Subic.

Q: US Navy?

General Howell: No, they were Canadian and led by a Brit [British ship]. They had a Brit as their host, and they were a Canadian squadron. So, I just couldn't resist, I put my wingman in trail and man, we got on the water behind them and just went right by them, and I mean almost supersonic, just Sssheeeeeewwwwww [phonetic]! I get up in front and do a victory roll and come in. I know it just scared the hell out of them because I almost scared myself. But, that was just a sweet thing. Go in, break, land at Cubi, and it's Happy Hour, you know, shower and all that stuff. End up down at Subic, at their happy hour, and there's this long table with all these guys in whites down there. You know, this is about two or three hours later and we'd been at the Cubi Club getting tanked up, and end up down at Subic, and here are these guys. I walk up to their table and I said, "Ohhhh, you look like visitors!" "Oh yes, we are [with British accent]." The Brit was, of course, in charge. I said, "Did ya'll just come in today?" "Yes, we did! We just came in [with British accent]." I said, "Well, did you notice a couple of Phantoms going by as you entered?" And then, "OH YEAH, Bloody Good Show!!! [with cheerful British accent]," and all that stuff. So, I said, "Well, that was us." "Oh, come join us [with British accent]!" We end up raising hell with these guys. We end up onboard one of these things, at about one or two in the morning. They have their liquor locker open, you know, drinking raw scotch and just having a great time. I was talking to their surgeon about flying, he said, "I always wanted to fly!" I said, "Well, are you qualified in anything?" He said, "I'm qualified for diving." I said, "that's good enough [happily]!" I said, "Come down." Of course, I'm drunker than a skunk. I said, "Come on down over to our place tomorrow morning and I'll take you up on a hop." "Good, I'll do that."

Q: Well did it happen?

General Howell: I go and just CRASH. You know, all-of-the-sudden it's nine o'clock and somebody is shaking me in the rack. "WhaaaaaatTTTT [hung-over groan]!!!" "Hey Beak, there's some guy with a funny accent here. He says that you've promised to fly him in an airplane." I went, "Oh my God!" and he said, "Yeah." So, I struggle out and go to the new ops officer, Major Tom Dixon, who had just checked in and was a great guy. I say, "Hey Maj., I've got this

problem...” And I checked down the line and said, “Ya’ll got any aircraft?” “Oh yes, we’ve got a test flight. We’ve got an engine that we need to fly.” And I said, “Ok,” and I tell him what I’d done. He said, “Beak, if you crash that thing, don’t come back; just die with the airplane.” So, I said, “Ok.” So, I actually take this guy on a test hop, but I’m so hung-over, and I had no business doing it. I was sucking in that pure oxygen trying to get my head cleared, and we go up and do some acrobatics, and all that kind of stuff. Then, there are those islands, so I said, “Would you like to see a simulated napalm run?” “Oh, yes I would.” So, I go in for a low, 200 foot, drop kind of thing, and press it a little bit further than I thought and just barely cleared that thing. I just scared the shit out of myself, just “whhhooooo,” [sound of someone gasping for air deeply, like they just had a close call] you know one of those things. I said, “What did you think about that?” He said, “My word, I thought we’d submerged [dry English accent].” [Laughing]

I’ll never forget that as long as I live, and right at that time I got a hydraulic light, or an engine fire light, or something, and that saved my bacon because I was able to say, “We’ve got to bingo. We’ve got to go home.” So, I got him back, and we landed, but that was one of things. I don’t think anybody would really believe that happened, but it actually happened. That is a true story. That was hilarious.

Q: Of course, had the aviation safety program really kicked in at this time, in Vietnam?

General Howell: No, no, no it was very informal.

Q: They didn’t have safety departments, they didn’t have ASO’s [Aviation Safety Officers] then did they?

General Howell: People were still raving about how TACAN was the salvation of navigation, before it was all ADF [automatic direction finder]. TACAN was really the cat’s meow. You know, when I went through flight training it was a new thing. So everybody was saying, “It’s too easy now,” you know with TACAN. Of course, now you’ve got the computer & GPS and all that kind of stuff.

Q: TACAN seems very primitive now.

General Howell: It was, but it was up to the individual, that’s why a squadron commander was so important. Really, the whole climate of the squadron rested on the personality and the

professionalism of the squadron commander.

Q: Leadership.

General Howell: So, they drove it. And so, whether the squadron was doing well or not, it was really up to the squadron commander; and the group commander stayed out of it too. They let them do what they wanted. If the squadron commander didn't hack it, he got relieved and sent home. I think that's one reason why Marsh didn't keep that squadron very long. I also think he was ready to go.

Q: Do you think people at the higher levels knew that things weren't good in 542?

General Howell: They see it. I don't know. I would think so.

Q: You look at legendary squadrons like 214, in World War II with Pappy Boyington...

General Howell: Great leadership.

Q: That's an example of how the one individual can change the character of the squadron.

General Howell: Well, you talk about Bauer, Harold Bauer. You know, Bill Bauer's dad, I don't know if you ever met "The Bullet" Bill Bauer. We flew together.

Q: No, I know about Harold Bauer though.

General Howell: Well, that was his father. You know, he got the Medal of Honor? He was the first skipper of 212, but I talked to some guys who flew with him on Guadalcanal and they said, "Everybody loved him, and not just in his squadron." They said, "Basically, [Roy S.] Geiger," who was the commanding General, "he basically had Bauer run that whole operation, as well as being the squadron commander."

Q: The Cactus Air Force.

General Howell: Yes, everybody called him, "Coach." That was his call sign, everybody called

him, "Coach," because everybody loved him and respected him, and whatever he said, they did. That Bauer always took the toughest hops and they'd go with him. So, it's amazing how leadership was so important. To this day it's important. But, we've managed to make it a lot more standard and safer I think; and for good reason.

Q: Well, there's a good and a bad side to that I guess. If you don't have a good leader it compensates for that wouldn't you say?

General Howell: Right, and you know our mishap rate was horrible, it was horrendous. It was accepted. "He bought the farm!" "Well, he screwed up. Get another airplane. Let's go."

Q: Was it sort of survival of the fittest, the idea: "They weren't that good of pilots anyways."

General Howell: That was it. That was really sort of the attitude. I hate to admit it, but I was brought up in that attitude; and it's not very sensitive, but it was the old, "Better him than me. Let's drink a drink to him tonight and move on." And if you didn't have that attitude you couldn't stick around very long, I don't think.

Q: Does that same type of leadership apply to the infantry? What's the difference between the two?

General Howell: I think good leadership is good wherever you go. I think that the only difference is-- I really believe that it's tougher on the aviation leader to the degree that he flies with his guys. So, they know him. I mean, familiarity breeds contempt, they know the warts on his nose. Where in the grunts the leader is always apart; very few people know him well. But, a lot of the troops they don't really know the leader well at all. So, there's a mystique in the infantry that in the air wing you don't have that mystique because he's there and everybody knows him, and you rub shoulders. And so, in that regard, I think the leadership challenge is higher in aviation in a lot of ways.

Q: There's a sense of equality because everybody has to do the same thing, as far as flying goes.

General Howell: Yes, and it's not until you get into combat that I think you get this equilibrium in the infantry. You know, you'll really see a fraternity between enlisted and officer in combat in the

ground that you don't see in peace time because those guys are under fire together they really know who they can depend on and they get real tight. You just don't get that on the ground side during peacetime because it's not until you cheat death that you really understand, and learn about who you can trust and who you can't.

In aviation, not a lot of difference between combat and regular training—it's really not much difference at all, except somebody's shooting at you; but the type of training that we do in aviation with peacetime is so realistic. It's very risky.

Q: More people get killed just in operational accidents than they do in combat, at least that was the case historically. I don't know, was it like that in Vietnam too? I was looking at some of the people that were killed in 542, there's a couple of those who were operational.

General Howell: Most of them were. There was a take-off. We had another great guy, this guy "Moe," was flying with a great captain [Paul Cole] and they got nailed. Yes, they got hit, and then they flew out over the water and they ejected. The pilot broke his back, but recovered. "Moe" got tangled up and drowned.

Q: In his parachute?

General Howell: Yes, in his 'chute. So, they had a successful ejection, but he got tangled up and the seat didn't work right. In a lot of ways, that's our admin, you know? He wasn't killed by a round or anything. He even had made a successful ejection. He got out ahead of the pilot, and the pilot made it. Anyways, of course the pilot never flew again because he broke his back. He's a great guy by the way. He's up at Quantico.

Yes, he was with the MCAA [Marine Corps Aviation Association] up there for years. I don't know if he still is, and he's just a GREAT guy! His back was just in terrible [condition], and he wanted to fly. But, he might have flown a little bit, but his back got destroyed by that. Those were the old [ejection seats], they didn't have rocket seats back then.

Q: Oh, they didn't?

General Howell: It was just a damn shotgun shell. I mean it was instantaneous 19 g's on your back. It was a Martin Baker [ejection seat manufacturer], a back breaker in those days before they got the rockets on. It was really tough. It would get you out safely, it had a good reputation. A lot

of seats, I mean, it was like a 50/50 shot with a lot of the early ejection seats, whether you made it or not with the ejection seat. But, Martin Baker would get you out and get your 'chute open, but it would break your back doing it a lot of times.

Q: What did the RIOs do on the CAS missions and other missions, actually, it doesn't seem that there would be a lot for him to do, not much radar work, was there?

General Howell: No radar work at all. It was all outside, helping you with altitudes and airspeeds on your runs; a lot of that, "Mark!" you know calling in marks. And you'd agree, "This is going to be this kind-of-thing. Give me a mark. Give me a standby at so-and-so. Give me a mark at a certain altitude." And then, they'd call "Mark," and call it again. Then, "Pull out!" You know, you got a lot of "Pull out! Pull out!" kinds of things. And so, as the RIO's got more savvy, they got better at situational awareness and could tell if the pilot was stretching a run, got a little shallow, so he's going to have to move a little bit closer. The new guys didn't understand that, and so they were going by the book and then sometimes they'd get very excited.

Q: Were you crewed up with a RIO? I noticed you flew with Bill Poole a lot.

General Howell: Yes, that was toward the end. Bill joined the squadron in Iwakuni and we tried our best. We thought that "crewing" would be good. Particularly, to get the new RIO's with the older pilots and vice-versa, and so, that's why. Bill's a great guy, a good guy. The last time I talked to him he was living in Florida and he's just a wonderful fellow. He got out of the Marine Corps.

Q: Do you remember the mission on September 11, 1967, with Walter Samora on a CAS mission?

General Howell: We were with "Harv" Bradshaw, wasn't it Bradshaw? He was the leader of that I think.

Q: I don't know. I'm just going off of what's in your record book, but you were put in for a DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] for that.

General Howell: I know, ok. No, we were by ourselves. Yes, I do remember the mission. We were...

Q: working Togo 88.

General Howell: That was when the runway was closed, and we were taking off on the taxiway. I took off and swung around over the base, waiting for my wingman to take-off. We were having to take-off one at a time on this taxiway, and he had to abort. We had a mission, it was supposed to be up in the northern I Corps area, and we checked in with the controllers and I told them, I said, “Hey! I’m a single airplane.” He said, “Well, single-airplanes can’t go there. We’re going to send you south.” So, we ended up supporting this area south of Chu Lai; this wasn’t far from Chu Lai at all. It was where the ROK [Republic of Korea] Marines were located. They had American FAC’s with them, though, controlling. And this was a hot area, these guys were under attack and had a bunch of VC [Viet Cong] that they had sort of rooted up in a cantonment. They sort of found a nest of them.

Q: They were on three sides of the cantonment, or something?

General Howell: Yes, something like that.

Q: Your talking about the one on May 29th, 1968—but go ahead and talk about that one because I was going to ask you about it later.

General Howell: Okay.

Q: But, this other one was different.

General Howell: Okay, that’s the one, I guess, that was with Bradshaw then, “Harv” Bradshaw. It must be then.

Q: Bradshaw was

General Howell: He was the leader.

Q: Ok, he was lead.

General Howell: Samora, was my RIO and that one I remember it well because it was a “hot target.” There was a lot of VC in the open. I’ll tell you, the FAC went crazy because we caught a bunch of them in a bunch of trenches, and trying to get away; and they were shooting at us. We just nailed them and Harv was leading. He got his first ones on target, and it was just basically the FAC saying, “Put yours just about 50 meters beyond his.” And then, “Ok you hit.” [Then the FAC said to Bradshaw] “Put yours in.” We just ended up “Cleaning clock” with them. We had a bunch of kills. They counted all kinds of bodies, and they were shooting at us. Bradshaw loved to write himself up, and Bradshaw wrote that up.

Q: Oh, he did.

General Howell: Yes, he wrote it up and put us in. Lo-and-behold I found out that I was being put in for a DFC, and it got downgraded by, I think General [Victor] Krulak had FMFPac then, it got downgraded to a NavyCom [Navy Commendation Medal]. And so, no, I never got a DFC in Vietnam because I refused to write myself up. A lot of guys--in our squadron we had Mel Krone, who was our awards officer. Mel was lazy, and would not write people up. So, you go to any squadron that was in Vietnam, any guy that had over a hundred missions usually got a DFC out of something because the awards officers made sure of it. And Mel said, “Well, you know, you had a good hop. Write it up and we’ll submit it.” I refused to do it. To me it was a thing of honor, I would never try to submit myself for some kind of a damn award.

Q: Do you remember the mission from May?

General Howell: That one in May, of the next spring, we just ended up coming through clouds. I mean that thing [target] was covered. We popped through the clouds. These guys are shooting at us, and lo-and-behold the damn target is IN MY SIGHTS! [with extreme satisfaction]! And I go, “ppppppppquiiittt” [sound of machine gun strafing or bomb splat]. I pulled off and we just hammered the thing. The FAC guy screamed, “Good God! There are bodies flying out of the building and all over the place!” He just went nuts.

Q: Direct hit?

General Howell: Yes. We just blew it to smithereens.

Q: That was the one on September 11th, you just got them backwards. That was the one that you were put in for the DFC for.

General Howell: Ok, yes. You know, he wrote me up, big time! Yes, he sent a message saying, "This was a great hop. This guy did a great job." So, the group put me in for the DFC, and nothing to my knowledge came out of that.

Q: In your record book, it's got the write up and everything, but I looked at it again and it said, "Proposed language," or something like that. That was the only difference between that and the real DFC.

General Howell: Maybe it never got submitted, I don't know.

Q: I don't know, but it's all in there.

General Howell: Okay, so be it. But, those were pretty typical. I'll tell you, most of those close air support hops, ones that never got written up, that I'm very proud of, was when we went back in. When we went back into country, we went into Da Nang. We ended up in Da Nang.

Q: After being in Iwakuni?

General Howell: Yes, we end up flying out of Da Nang, and it was a whole new ballgame flying out of Da Nang. Busy, busy, busy. Chu Lai was all Marines and it had the two different runways, so the A-4's and the A-6's, the A-6's would use the concrete runway for their long take-off runs because they were flying at night. The A-4's basically mostly used the metal runway and we used the concrete. So, it was easy getting in and out of Chu Lai. Da Nang was just loaded because of all the transports bringing all of the soldiers and Marines and airmen there came into Da Nang. Da Nang was a big place where they shipped out all of the dead bodies. It was a big port of entry and exit, in-and-out of country. The Air Force had that big terminal. I don't know how many Air Force fighter squadrons were at Da Nang. There were a bunch of them. So, ops were hectic and very rarely, when you taxied out, would you be less than number 12 or 13 for take-off.

Q: Any differences in the living conditions?

General Howell: Yes. We had a lot of fun in Chu Lai. When you would go to the [Officers'] Club and sing, we all had songbooks and we sang songs. We had cheap booze and were outrageous. We did some things that were really naughty. A bunch of men, it's just like doing locker room antics in the club, you know because there's just a bunch of men there. Da Nang was different. There were Red Cross volunteers and civilians around there. Our group commander really held tight grip on the clubs. He said, "There will be no cussing in the club," and that kind of thing.

Q: Was it a common Club with the Air Force? I'm sure they had their own club.

General Howell: No, we had our own Club. It was the MAG-11 Club. We were on the Marine side. And so, the Wing headquarters was there, but it was up on the north side of our side, and we hardly got around those guys. I think they had their own club. I stayed away from the Wing. I didn't want to get close to those guys because I was afraid I might get trapped. I just tried to stay with my squadron and fly [laughing].

I just wanted to fly jets. But, we were flying similar missions there, that we flew, and one mission that I remember that really meant a lot to me, was when we had a wingman and we flew out. We had 250 pound or 500 pound snake-eyes. I think that's all we had; maybe we had napalm too, snake and napes. We got a call from the FAC, had a guy and a squad of Marines were trapped on a ridgeline, a narrow ridgeline on top of some hill mass. They were in trouble and they were being pinned down. They said, "They can't get any help from artillery in because their up on this ridgeline and they just can't hit the target. And these guys are running out of ammo, they're in trouble. Can you help them?" I said, "We'll give them everything we can." So, we come in there and he said, "Okay, were going to put smoke on the enemy." So, the FAC has "willie-peter" [white phosphorous rockets]. "Zap!" and we see it. Then, the FAC said, "Now, we're going to have the friendlies pop red smoke." They popped their smoke and the two intermixed. That's how close they were. I mean they were together. So, we couldn't run up and down the ridgeline because the friendlies were up on the ridgeline too. So, we had to go across the ridgeline and you either had to hit it perfect or it'd skip over and land in the next valley. You know, if the bombs go short they'll hit way short on the front side. If you go long they just go way over because it was just a narrow ridgeline. And I hammered that sucker. I'd never been prouder in my life. I put it right on those guys, right on that ridge and the FAC said, "Man, you got 'em." He said, "The squad leader wants you to know that you saved their bacon and they're going to get out of there." So, that's one of those great moments. It was just satisfaction and I'd gotten really good flying that machine. So, it really makes you feel good when you accomplish something because that's what

we're trying to do.

Q: You were dropping snake-eyes, you said, 250 pound?

General Howell: Yes, and these might have been 500 pound. I think we'd run out of 250's, and so we were dropping 500 pound snake eyes close to the friendlies. It was hairy, and they knew it. We told them, "All we got is 500 pound snake-eye'." He said, "They know it. This is the only chance they've got."

Q: That must be tremendously satisfying to do something like that. You flew a lot of different types of missions, but would you say that CAS was the most satisfying?

General Howell: Absolutely. Anytime that you could help the friendlies, and help the Marines on the ground, that was really good. I flew a lot of close air support, DAS, deep air support, meant that you were at least 500 meters away from the friendlies, but we flew a lot of stuff in support of troops on the ground that just wasn't that close to them. Then, you had what they called the "Tally-Ho's," which were targets of opportunity away from the troops. I flew a lot of missions, you know we got in there after Tet, but Khe Sahn was still hot. They had broken through to it, but it was still a hot area up there and we flew a lot of missions up around Khe Sahn. It looked like the side of the moon with all the craters around it. It's really thick green jungle up there because it rains some much up in those highlands, but it was just pock marks everywhere. Khe Sahn was just a big red scar on the top of this hill, you know with a metal strip on it. But, they held onto it. We flew a lot of missions when we got back in-country in support of the ground forces around that area, hitting targets around that area. We got up in the Ashau, the Ashau Valley is not far away from Khe Sahn at all. It runs north and south and it's a main road for the NVA and we hit a lot of targets up there.

Q: Would they be under direct FAC control too?

General Howell: Always, we always had, very rarely did you hit a target without a controller. Sometimes, we had "Fast FAC's," you'd have an Air Force F-100 and they'd be up there trolling around. They'd control us. When you got away from the Marines and into the Laos border, the Ashau, and that area sometimes you'd be controlled by the Air Force. He'd either be in a "push-pull," in one of their spotter planes, or in a jet. They used F-100's a lot for "FAST FAC" because they were two-seaters and had the guy in the back with a map, and they were pretty good. They

just didn't ever want to get around the troops, around friendlies.

Q: So, the Air Force didn't?

General Howell: No, they didn't want to drop ordnance that close to friendlies.

Q: Was this an apparent difference, between Air Force CAS and Marine CAS?

General Howell: Well, there wasn't a difference. The Air Force didn't have CAS. They just didn't, that wasn't their thing. They were going after tactical and strategic targets; hard targets that they wanted to go get. Supporting Marines on the ground was not what they were about. They thought helicopters should do that, and slow-movers. They didn't think that jets should do that. So, that was their thing.

Q: One of your fitness reports, sir, said that you were a leader of the 542 Officer's Choral Group. Where did you pick-up on the idea that aviators are supposed to sing in the club?

General Howell: That was 542 when I got there. When I joined that squadron I'd never been in anything like that. Those guys would go to the club, sit at a long table and sing songs together; and just had a great time. I just thought it was neat. You know, I had read books about the Cossacks in Russia, how when they rode into combat they'd sing songs together and everything. I don't know if you remember this, but there was an old comic strip when I was a kid called "The Blackhawks." I don't know if you've ever heard of "The Blackhawks." It was a squadron of mercenary fighter pilots who did great things like helped the poor and took from the rich kind of thing. And, in the comic strip they'd always be in a formation singing together. Now, how you do that over a UHF [ultra high frequency radio] I'll never know, but "The Blackhawks..." So, I just thought that was neat.

So in my college fraternity we'd sing. We used to go out, and in those days when I was in a fraternity, all the women had to be inside by 11 o'clock. So, that meant, that gave you the opportunity for the men to get together and practice songs. Then, you'd go to a sorority house, or to a women's dormitory, and serenade them when they're all inside. They would come to the windows, and listen, and sing songs back. Singing was always a great pleasure. My mother taught us all. My mother had a wonderful voice and we all sang in the church choir. I sang in the church choir. So, I just loved singing. Of course, in the squadron it was all mostly bawdy, awful songs;

but I really thought it helped with camaraderie. I saw that in that squadron. In 542, the other squadrons would try to respond but 542 just blasted them out. I mean 542, loved to do that and they sang. So, even after Hubner left, and going to Japan and coming back, we just kept up that tradition. Every time we'd go to the club, we'd always go to a table together, sit down, and sing songs together.

Q: Marine squadrons in World War II did that too.

General Howell: Well, you look at Jack Dailey, General Dailey, who I didn't meet until I was a lieutenant colonel, one of his favorite jokes was: "Three fighter guys standing together, three old-timers saying, 'what's the most important position in a squadron to make you a great squadron?' Of course, one guy says, 'You have to have a great maintenance officer to keep the airplanes flying. You can't fly without a maintenance officer.' Then, the other guy says, 'Oh, bull! You've got to have a great operations officer to plan the training and tactics, and get everybody combat ready. That's what the most important billet is.' And then, the third guy says, 'Aww, you're both wrong. You've got to have a good piano player.'" So, there's something to be said about that.

Q: I guess so. Well, that's a big part of it, isn't it? For a Marine aviation, or maybe for aviation in General is that camaraderie that develops in the Officers' Club, that esprit.

General Howell: Esprit, you're darn right.

Q: Anything else on that tour?

General Howell: So, that was important. When I left 542, it was a good tour and the squadron was shaping up well in Da Nang. I had one incident right before I left I had a nugget on a TPQ-10 flight up close to Quang Tri, where the canopy--did I tell you that I lost a canopy in Chu Lai?

Q: No sir.

General Howell: When we were flying out of Chu Lai, I hadn't been there a month and we were a helicopter escort. They were actually going up to Khe Sahn, I think. They were going up that valley, and we were escorting them when they came under fire. So, we started making bomb runs and Pat Faulkner was my leader. I was a wingman. On the second run, rolling in, half-way

through the run--"BOOM!!!," and my canopy blew off. Of course, Chu Lai is so full of sand that the cockpit was full of sand. "Whoosh!" and all that sand blew in my face. Even though I had my visor down, I just got a face full of sand. I was blinded and it scared the heck out of me. I pulled out and I'm getting ready [to eject], "I've been hit! I've been hit! [panicked]" But, the airplane is still flying and I started clearing my eyes. There's a roar. It's noisy. I know I'm in trouble but when I finally see, and the airplane is responding to me, I just turned toward the ocean, which was about 50 miles away because if we're going to eject I want to eject over the water. But, the plane is still flying and the throttle is still working. So, we head out there and I'm just screaming. I can't hear anything because of the roar. I can't hear the guy in the back. I'm just saying, "I'm in trouble! I'm in trouble! I'm headed for the water!" So, Faulkner comes off and he finally catches up with me. He gets alongside and gets me to "throttle back, throttle back. You got to slow down." As I slow down, with the volume all the way up, I could hear him; but barely. He said, "Hey! You look OKAY! [Faulkner shouting over comm]!" By that time, when I was trying to turn around and see if my backseater was still there, I felt the windblast. That's when I realized that I didn't have a canopy.

Q: That was the first time that you realized it?

General Howell: Didn't know it because the wind was not hitting me. It was just this terrible roar. Frankly, I could see a lot better. You know, it was a lot clearer because all of those canopies were beat up, scratched up, and dirty; there at Chu Lai. But, he flew around and looked at and he said, "You look okay. We'll escort you back in. Just do a straight in [approach]. I think you're ok. Check all of your instruments." I didn't have a hydraulic failure or anything. So, I land and get on the runway. Ed Meglareese was in my backseat, and all that wind went right around me, right around my seat, and hit him right in the face. He looked like he had been beaten by rubber hose when we got back.

Q: He didn't have his visor down?

General Howell: I think he did. His whole body was beat up. He went to bed for two days. It just beat him up, the jet stream. Because he still had his canopy, so he was just in the middle of this conundrum.

Q: He might have been better to blow his off too.

General Howell: Yes, and so he didn't hear me until we were rolling out, before he could hear me talking to him. Because he was going, I kept hearing him shout, "BEEAKK! BEEAKK! ARE YOU OKAY!?! [extremely loud panicked shouting]" You know, and I was trying to answer him, but he never heard because he was just getting beat up.

Q: So, did you get in trouble, or how did that shake out?

General Howell: Well, we had this experience. I don't know if it was the same airplane, but, I got a lot of heat. People thought that I inadvertently hit my "Open Canopy" switch, and that just pissed me off. I said, "No, I did not [with conviction]." [Then someone else said,] "Well, we're not sure." Well, they put a new canopy on there, Harv Bradshaw, the maintenance officer takes it up on a test-flight, "BOOM!!!" It blew off again.

That saved me and my reputation. He comes back, and he told the flight equipment, the seat shop, they were the ones that trimmed the canopies and stuff. He said, "You put it on right this time. And, oh-by-the-way, you're going up in my backseat. If that thing blows off again, I'm going to eject you out of that thing!" [Laughing].

Well, these guys were on a TPQ-10, night hop, and they hadn't had more than three or four missions, newbies in-country. We'd Fam-ed them out in Iwakuni and Cubi. They were good guys. Usually, you put seasoned guys with younger guys, but it was a "milkrun," a TPQ-10 radar hop. You know, I'm still writing the damn schedule. It's FRAG for right at the Hue, Phu Bai, you know right off that TACAN. Well, they get changed by the TAOC while their airborne, up further north, where they're doing a TPQ-10 north of the DMZ, in Indian country. Lo-and-behold, they're in their run, over the ocean going into North Vietnam and "BOOM!" the backseater's canopy comes off. He thinks that they've been hit, so he ejects and just "Boowwoo [sound of explosion]!" The frontseater doesn't know what the hell is going on, but he's still flying the airplane so he just turns around and comes home. The backseater is up there.

He's in his 'chute, everything works, floating down. He pulls out his radio, and he says, "HELP!" [frantically] So, they put out the word, that the guy called, "I've got a problem. I lost my backseater. I think we were hit, but don't know why." So, they end up scrambling "Jolly Green" out of Da Nang, and they say, "Well, where is it?" They said, "It's just north of the red line, over the water." They said, "Well, we don't go north at night. They're going to have to wait until the morning. Because there are too many traps, too many Indians put out too many ambushes at night for us." We had a couple of Marine MedEvac [Medical Evacuation] Hueys [UH-1] are up, flying

through there, and hear all of this stuff. They say, “Where is he? Maybe we can go find him.” So, they direct them out there, and this guy, he’s hit the water, fumbles around, gets in his raft, laying there and he can’t find his radio. So, he’s sitting there like an idiot, but he’s got this terrible pain in his back. He thinks he’s broken his back, and he sort of fumbling around and reaching, well it was his radio sticking him in his back. He finally pulls it around and screams, “HELP!” Right at this time, the Hueys are about 20 or 15 miles away and they say, “Hey! We hear you. Just press down and we’ll ADF on you.” So, these guys come in at night and hover above him. They don’t have any leash or anything. So, they get a crewman, just with his tether, to get down on the runners. Then he pulls his ass into the Huey, from out of the water. Then, they brought him home.

We have him back at Da Nang, the next morning, by 10 o’clock. He’s just got a big black eye where in the ejection something hit him, or something. But, Hutchinson, after it all occurs we hear about it. I get awakened at three in the morning, “We’ve lost a bird.” And I said, “Oh my goodness!” Then, we find out, “No! We haven’t lost a bird. He ejected.” He wants to know, “How did you let two nuggets go—yayayaya.

Q: Because you were the schedule writer.

General Howell: Yes. I was the flight officer, I approved the schedule. I said, “Sir, let me look into it. I’m as surprised as you. If I did it, it’s my fault, but I just don’t understand how I did that.” When I researched it, I found out that it was scheduled as a TPQ-10, and it was going to be way south. You know, it was going to be a “milk run.” I went back, I said, “Skipper, you’ve got to cut me some slack on this. Here’s why....” He had finally cooled off, particularly when they picked the guy up. But, he was really upset with me. I thought that I’d screwed the pooch, but it worked out okay. That was sort of my parting gesture. It’s funny, I had the one guy shoot himself in the foot when I left the battalion; and here I’m leaving my first combat squadron and I think that I’m going to be nailed because I screwed up on a judgment call. But, it didn’t turn out that bad. That’s just the way that life is: “The sun don’t shine on the same dog all the time.” You have good days and you have others, but I came on home.

Q: I show you coming out of there in July of 1968?

General Howell: Yes, it was a 13-month tour. If you got there in June, then you were going to leave in July.

Q: What was it like coming home after that?

General Howell: It was great. It was a bit of a letdown. It was great being back, great being alive, great being back with my family, and all that. In Atlanta, I received orders to flight training command, and was going to get to keep flying. So, I was really happy about that. I got down there and the F-9's, the "teeny-weenies," were just old little kiddy cars. It was quite a letdown initially, especially coming out of Phantoms, to be back in the F-9's.

Q: But, that's still the advanced jet training, is that right?

General Howell: Yes, but it was certainly a big difference.

Q: They didn't have A-4's then?

General Howell: No, I flew in the first A-4's there. I was in the first group to FAM in the A-4, and bring them to Texas.

Q: What was your impressions of the training command?

General Howell: There were two wonderful things that I discovered there. One is that a lot of guys there are great guys, and great pilots. A lot of them are Vietnam veterans, and most of them are Marines. The really good Navy fighter guys stayed in the fleet, and went to the fleet re-training squadrons as instructors. Most of the Navy instructors were a bunch of multi-engine guys, and prop guys, who they basically Fam-ed in the jets and then made them jet instructors, which gave us one hell of an advantage because of the advanced stuff: formation, air-to-ground, air-to-air, and gunnery all went mostly to the Marines because we were the experienced jet pilots. So, I had great hops. I only had, I think, two "A" students the whole time I was there. Of course, I was only there one year and one of them was Denny Krupp. He did a great job.

Q: What do you mean by an "A" student?

General Howell: You take them through A-stage, which is FAM. You have one instructor through FAM stage to solo, and then you get all the instructors together so it doesn't matter who your instructor is. But, you have one guy take you to solo. I don't remember my first guy's name, but

he was very weak and I had to “down” him. When you down them you have to turn them over to another instructor. I was starting to wonder because my next student was sort of weak and...

Q: You thought you might have been being too tough on them?

General Howell: Well, no. I’m thinking that I’m not a very good instructor, then Krupp comes along and this guy is great! So, I’m thinking, “Well you get some good and some others...”

Frankly, I don’t think that I was that great of an instructor. I’ve never been a real detail guy, and as an instructor you really have got to be on the details of teaching people details. I had to work hard to be a good instructor.

Q: Going into that did you have a philosophy, as far as, your approach to teaching?

General Howell: One of the most wonderful things that I discovered was the instructor under training program, IUT. It was excellent. The Navy Training Command puts instructors through a rigorous training program to be instructors, both ground and flight training. They demand that you know your stuff and that you fly that airplane to the “T,” on altitude, on airspeed, for instruments and everything. They will not make you a qualified instructor until you really are on the ball.

Quite frankly, I discovered, even though I was a great pilot and in my mind I could fly an airplane anywhere and do anything; I had gotten sloppy as a pilot. IUT was one of the best things that happened to me because they really make you demand of yourself strict accordance with altitude, airspeed, and everything you’re doing needs has to be right on; because you’re going to demonstrate all that to the students.

Q: Yes, the fundamentals.

General Howell: Yes, everything from fundamentals to--I mean doing an “S-pattern” on instruments is not easy for anybody, including the instructor; and you have to do it right to show the student. So, it really drives you into being a very precise, correct pilot. So, that was really a great experience for me. I carried that wherever I went, that was really a great foundation for me, for later flying; so, I ended up enjoying that and because we were flying the advanced stuff.

Q: What about gunnery, you had mentioned that was difficult for you when you were a student.

General Howell: There was a guy named Monty Nichols there who was one of the greatest fighter pilots on earth. He was a Navy guy who taught gunnery. He really taught me how to really nail a banner. I used to go to all of his lectures and got in as many gunnery hops as I could. That was fun. That was neat. After the problem that I'd had in flight training, coming back I became a pretty decent gunnery pilot in the F-9, the little AF-9 single-seat. We used them for gunnery and they were a lot of fun.

Q: You mentioned you were there when A-4s were brought in?

General Howell: It came about that spring, all the sudden, VT-21 our squadron was the first squadron to get the TA-4's. They assigned six of us out of the squadron, I was one of the six, and sent us out to Lemoore [Naval Air Station] where they had TA-4F's; there at Lemoore, in their training RAG. We got Fam-ed in the TA-4F's and got about 15 or 20 hours over a two-week period. Then, we drove up to Twentynine Palms, to the Douglas Plant and got into six brand new – my airplane had two and a half hours on it – and taxied out. We actually started them up, signed the book for the government, accepted this airplane from Douglas for the government of the United States of America, and then taxied out of the plant; out to the runway and took off and flew them off to Texas.

Q: Were they painted white and orange?

General Howell: They were white and orange, and smelled like a new car.

Q: I'll bet that's nice.

General Howell: They were just nice and I mean nice. That was a real thrill.

Q: They had a plant at Twentynine Palms?

General Howell: Yes, still do, it's not Douglas anymore; Boeing is out there. They still have U-2 flying out of there still. But, NASA has a line out there. But, Admiral Turner, who wasn't my favorite guy, did not want us to fly them back. He wanted to be the first person to fly the A-4's into Kingsville. So, we had to fly them into Corpus Christi, NAS Corpus, and land them there. We ran into a lot of bad weather and got diverted and ended up almost "flaming out" before we got into

Corpus. It could have been, and it was very close to being a scandal. But, the skipper insisted that we go into Corpus and I shut down with about 200 pounds of fuel in that thing. One of the guys “flamed out” on the runway on a roll-out.

Q: That would have been a scandal, brand new airplanes.

General Howell: Oh, yes. And so, a week later Turner went and took them up on a FAM hop there, and then he flew them into Kingsville and had a big ceremony, “The Admiral Brings Them!” But, he got upset because we were about almost an hour late getting there because of weather and everything else; that’s why we almost “flamed out.” He got upset. He thought that we’d gone down to Kingsville and done a flyover. He was about to court-martial the skipper and all that. But, that’s another one of those stories.

Q: So you didn’t really take to instructing?

General Howell: I did my best. Frankly, I never saw myself as a very good instructor, and that’s just to be honest. I’ve always been more a “seat-of-the-pants” kind of guy and instructors really know that it should be more mechanical, I think; and be able to explain mechanics better. I’ve never been very good at that.

Q: I guess it was good to be back home in Texas, for more than a year?

General Howell: It was wonderful. I had her [Janel’s] mother come. By that time we had lost my father. We lost him when I was at Cherry Point, and then my mother came and stayed with us. By that time she had retired and she was starting to spend time with different children. She came and spent some time with us and that was great.

Q: Did you live on base, sir?

General Howell: No, I lived about two blocks from Texas A&I, and very close to the King Ranch Headquarters. I lived in a little suburb, in a little house, a little two-bedroom, it was the biggest house that I had ever lived in. I started buying furniture because we’d always had quarters and base furniture when we were at Cherry Point.

Q: That was the first time that you hadn't lived on base?

General Howell: That was it. So, that was a whole new ballgame for us. But, the whole neighborhood was mostly Navy and Marine pilots who were out at Kingsville, so we had a great group there. I made some very good friends there who are friends to this day, I mean very close. A guy named Doyle Baker was a Marine instructor and we started teaching together. He had been on exchange duty with the Air Force and bagged a MiG in an Air Force F-4 up in North Vietnam. He ended up transferring to the Air Force after that tour. He really loved being with the Air Force, but he's an old buddy and probably has more time in the F-4 than anybody. I think he and "Lancer," General [Mike] Sullivan, still argue about who has more time in the F-4. I think "Lancer" has more time in the F-4 than any Marine, and I think Doyle has more than any Air Force guy.

Q: Going back to the Vietnam portion, maybe we can talk about it later on, was there any desire to "go get a MiG."

General Howell: That's all that you thought about. You felt very frustrated, came back and you have the "Red River Rats," you know the guys who had flown North and you feel like.... So those guys, they've got their own organization and to qualify you had to have flown over the Red River. So, we had some of our A-6 guys, but as a rule most of the Marines [had not] and so you really felt like you weren't a player. That all changed, getting ahead of myself, we went back in and we flew Linebacker Missions up North, and so I became a "Red River Rat" four years later.

Q: We'll talk about that.

General Howell: Yes, but at that time there was great frustration in that regard. But, the flying at Kingsville was wide-open, there were always test hops. We were really pushing guys through so you automatically had three hops per day, and you could snivel for a fourth. You were flying your butt off, it was not unusual to get 50 to 60 hours a month of flying. On test hops, you'd get off the runway, and go up and fly your test, and then go to a local area and all the test hops would be up there and you'd pounce. It was just, "Katie Bar of the door," nothing briefed or anything, just go out and wrestle with the other airplanes. If a guy was really getting to you, you'd go fly into a cloud to get him off. It was just wide-open. On my wife's birthday you know do a low-pass over the house kind of thing.

Q: Did you?

General Howell: Oh yes, and just break some windows and nobody would know, you'd have your IFF [phonetic] turned off and all those things. You tell her, you'd call her and say, "Hey honey, at three o'clock this afternoon go walk out on the street and see what you see." And then, "WOOSH!" doing a "flat hat" and all that crazy stuff; we had a great time.

Q: When you were there you decided to get a masters degree, why did you decide to do that?

General Howell: Well, I had applied when we were in Da Nang because the new S-1 officer grabbed me one day and said, "Hey Beak! You've got a college degree don't you?" Because we had a lot of MarCad's at that time who did not have college degrees, so I said, "Oh, yes sir." He said, "How were your grades in college?" I said, "I had high B's. I was a pretty good student, not a bad student." He said, "They just came out with this new advance degree program and you ought to apply for it." So, while I was in Da Nang I looked in the order and saw what they required. They were looking for engineers, mathematicians, and business majors.

Q: All the technical ones.

General Howell: But, right on the very end they had economics. I looked in my transcripts and by golly, I had a minor in economics that I'd forgotten I had; I thought I did, but forgot. So, I applied for the program and they had accredited schools you could apply to. So, I applied to the University of Texas and they had to both agree to it. So, the paperwork went forward and I just stayed in-country. Well, I come to Texas, and lo-and-behold halfway through my first year there in flight training I get a call from Headquarters, "You've been accepted to the advanced degree program, and the University of Texas has accepted you. So, you'll have orders next summer to go. We'll give you one year to get your Master's in Economics." So, I check in there, and they were happy to have me because the Economics Department at the University of Texas is renowned. Ray Marshall, who was the Dean then, later became the Secretary of Labor. So, they said, "Hey, you military guys make great students because you work hard. We know that you're going to do well." So, he said, and I can't remember the guy's name, but he was a wonderful guy. He said, "I'll set this program up for you and we'll get through. What are you really interested in?" I said, "I think I just want to sort of stay theory and try to go that way, instead of a specialty." He said, "That's fine.

We can do that. I've got this, this, this, and this. You know, in two-and-a-half years we'll have you out of here."

Q: [Laughing].

General Howell: I said, "Sir, I've got to do this in one year." He said, "WHAT?!" I said, "Well, the Commandant requires me to do it in one year." He just turned loose, he was really sort of a mousey little guy, and he just got irate. He almost came out of his chair. He said, "That's ridiculous! Anybody who thinks that you can get a Master's in Economics from the University of Texas in one year is NUTS!!! What's your Commandant's name? I'm going to call him right now [screaming at General Howell the entire time]!" [Laughing] I said, "No, you don't want to do that." I said, "How quick do you think we can do it?" And so, we worked it so if I did 17 hours a semester and summers, and sort of doubled up the courses while I did my thesis, I could get it done in a year and a half. So, I call into the Marine Corps and ask for an extension of a half a year." So, I started that fall of '69 and finished in December of '70. So, I had a Fall, Spring, Summer, and Fall semesters to get my Master's. I busted my butt.

Q: It's tough, economics is tough!

General Howell: It was tough! I had to take six hours of undergraduate Economics on top of it to build up, you know. That was all part of that. I had to put all that in there, and I worked my tail off. So, I didn't enjoy most of it, but some saving grace was that I had a couple of courses that were just incredible; the kind you never forget. A guy named Steven MacDonald was wonderful, and I'll just never forget his course. I had Ray Marshall for a course, the Dean, he was an incredible guy. So, a couple of others were really good, but most of it was just hard and miserable. You know, they call it "The Miserable Science" for good reason. So, I did that and anyways I got through it.

Q: Did you move the family up there to Austin?

General Howell: Oh yes--that's where my daughter was conceived and born, in Austin out at Bergstrom AFB. Oh, and there were some other good deals out of it. One, Texas went undefeated the whole time I was there. They beat Arkansas in the "shootout." I went to almost every game. I met the officer instructor at ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps], he and I buddied-up. He was

a Marine and had been chopped-up bad, and was actually still on a sort of rehabilitation as the Marine officer instructor there in the ROTC.

Yes, and he was a grunt and I was an aviator. He had me come in and talk to his candidates, or his cadets.

Q: Midshipman.

General Howell: Midshipman, yes, about Marine aviation. And so, he arranged to get me faculty tickets to the football games. So, we just had a great time in doing that.

Q: Did you still fly?

General Howell: You were still required to get your flight time back then. So, I was still going down to Kingsville once a month, and flying over a long weekend. They let me fly with them, but man that was a tough trip. So, I went out to Bergstrom Air Force Base, and just started knocking on doors, and I got to a support squadron, that had a bunch of T-33's out there. I said, "Are you guys looking for pilots?" And the guy almost kissed me, he said, "We sure are." This was 12th Air Force Headquarters right there. I don't know if you saw that circular Hilton Hotel?

That used to be the 12th Air Force Headquarters at Bergstrom Air Force Base and that squadron supported their IG inspectors that flew all over the western United States inspecting Guard and Reserve Squadrons. They'd just passed a regulation that a two-seat airplane with controls in both seats, had to have a rated-pilot in both seats, or they couldn't go. So, they said that they were "just screaming for pilots." So, I went and checked out in a T-33 with those guys, and flew all over the western United States with those guys getting my flight time in a T-33. I got about a little over 100 hours in a T-33 there. Later on, I flew it up at Headquarters, you know we had T-33's out at Andrews AFB for our proficiency pilot at Headquarters, too.

Q: What did you think of the T-33?

General Howell: That was an Air Force trainer. The T-33 was an old airplane with mechanical controls, very simple and easy to fly, and very forgiving; but no "legs" [fuel range] and if you got up to altitude you had to really watch your cabin altitude because it leaked like a sieve. So, the best thing to do was stay low, go short legs, and you'll still get there just about as quick; you'll just have to turn around a couple of times.

Q: Anything different about flying with the Air Force and the Navy? I mean in something like that would you pick-up much of the culture of the Air Force.

General Howell: This was guy's flying admin hops, so it wasn't the same.

Q: You're really not getting the Air Force "feel" there?

General Howell: No, most of these guys were very seasoned guys. The Air Force, at that time, had just a big flux of guys going all the way back to Korea they had an excess of pilots, and they had majors and captains with 25 years in that were still flying. So, a lot of these guys were great pilots, but their attitude was a little bit cynical. So, they were pretty casual. The first time I tried to make a "carrier approach" in one of those things it scared the hell out of my instructor, he said, "DON'T DO THAT! That's not the way we land airplanes in the Air Force!"

Q: They wanted a "flare," huh?

General Howell: So, they taught me how to come around and pick up your gear on a touch-and-go, and then drop them again. Basically, if you're really a good Air Force pilot you can pull your power to idle at the 180 [180 degrees out from landing] and make a good landing, if you really have your shit together in a T-33. A guy showed me how to do it and I was never that salty, but you can really, you know a flared landing is not really a bad way to go, it's nice, nice and easy. So, that was tough. The school was tough, but being with the family was great; especially the new baby.

Q: How did you hear about your next assignment?

General Howell: I get through most of that and I call the Marine Corps monitor. You see, part of the deal in an advanced degree program is that you've got to have a payback tour that applies to your degree. So, I call up there to my monitor and I said...

Q: What do you mean, like you've got to go and teach somewhere or something?

General Howell: Yes, or be a comptroller or something. I don't know, I don't know what they're

going to do with me. So, I call and I said, “What have you got planned?” He said, “We’ve got you down for Yuma, Arizona.” I said to myself, “Ok, I’m going to be the comptroller at Yuma.” Then, I said to him, “Any idea on what they’re going to do with me?” He said, “Well they’ve just brought a new F-4 training squadron, that was in El Toro and they’ve moved it, to Yuma.” He said, “I’ve got a feeling that you’ll be in that squadron.” I’m thinking, “Wow!” And so, I end up checking into [VMFAT-] 101.

Q: And that’s when they had moved it—this would have been in the ’71 timeframe?

General Howell: Yes, and it had been there, I guess, maybe five or six months when I got there.

Q: Before we go to that tour, what were the significant memories from your time in grad school?

General Howell: Memories of grad school: one, great championship football at Texas; working hard, but learning a lot; really getting to know the family a lot better than I ever had. So, I had fun with Jay, as a little baby boy, and our little daughter, Melissa. I made some good friends in the neighborhood, some “outside of the Marine Corps” kinds of friends.

Q: You lived here in Austin?

General Howell: Here in Austin. We lived right off of Burnett Road and Anderson Lane, right in an area that was just a brand new neighborhood back then that was the outskirts of town. Of course, MoPac [an expressway, where the Missouri/Pacific rail line had been] wasn’t there then, that was just a railroad track. So, the main drag, to get into town, was to get over to Interstate 35 or you’d go down to Lamar, Burnett, or Guadalupe, you know to get in; and it was stop-and-go, and traffic was really bad then. Traffic is terrible now, but you move at least now because they have ways of moving it.

Q: It ain’t bad [compared to D.C.]!

General Howell: I know it! You’re right. Washington is hateful, period.

Q: And Fredericksburg is getting that way, too.

General Howell: I'll tell you what's interesting, I saw a picture--you know the [Marine Corps] Heritage Foundation, Ron Christmas is a good, good friend, we served together in Hawaii. He sends me all that mail, and of course I send a little bit of money even though he wants a lot more. But, they sent pictures of them getting ready for the grand opening of Marine Corps Museum, and what's interesting and what people don't notice, I don't think, and what I noticed is that there is one shot of that thing, one angle shot, where they are showing I-95 and it is just chockablock full of cars!

Q: At that time at the University of Texas, did you encounter any anti-war stuff activity, anti-military?

General Howell: I probably should have talked about that. That was another aspect of it. It was a very negative attitude, and focus, at the University against the war, anti-war; it was really big time. It was getting big. It was funny, I always laughed at it. That was my approach to the whole thing, was just to laugh at it. I just thought that they were silly because, in my view, they didn't know what they were talking about. I thought that we were kicking their butts and I felt good about what I had done, and what we were doing over there. I never saw a Marine lose a battle over there, but these people were all really into it. There was a segment in front of the student union there was a continuous crowd. It ranged from 100 or 200 up to 1,000 or 2,000 students who had a continuous protest going on. A lot of those people didn't go to class, and a lot of them weren't students. They were just hanging out there. They had all of their sandals, beards, flowers, and dope. They were there all of the time, but then they would have these big rallies. It's funny, you know Galbraith, who just died his son now has a Chair there at LBJ [Library], as a very renowned professor within LBJ.

Q: The economist, John Kenneth Galbraith?

General Howell: Yes, well John Galbraith, he came there and I saw him in person lead an anti-war rally there in front of the tower, on the big promenade there at the University. I observed some of that and I just basically stayed away from it. I was in civilian clothes, but I had a short haircut because of my Marine haircut. I was a little bit older guy, you know I was in my thirties, so I was an older guy walking around there, which was sort of weird. But, people left me alone, except, once, Jerry Lindour, who was the officer instructor, invited me to come and talk to his midshipman. So, I thought that I should be in uniform. So, I wore my Marine uniform that day, on campus, to

go and talk to them. You know it's funny, people talk about spitting on you and everything--they got out of my way. It was really funny; maybe it's just the way that you handle yourself. But, I walked tall and I looked everyone one of them right-in-the-eye, and I sort of grinned at them, I just sort of smiled at them. It seemed to intimidate the hell out of people. Nobody ever stopped me or said anything to me outright, where I could hear it, of course I've got lousy hearing and maybe they were mumbling things. The only incident that I had was because I had to go to a couple of classes that day, attended class, and one of the classes was an undergrad class I had to go to. I sat down in class and this young girl comes in, and saw me, and screamed, "OH MY GAWD! A BABY-KILLER! Oh my God he's in this class! Oh my God!" And she ran out, fell down running out of the room, just went hysterical.

Some of the people sitting around me sort of moved a couple of seats over, you know? It was a pretty big lecture, it was an undergrad course and that was the only sort of incident that I encountered in that regard.

Q: That's just hard to believe that that happened in those days when compared to how the military is viewed today.

General Howell: Oh yes, well, it was cool. They were taking over the president's offices and driving the ROTC off-campus. There was a move to do that at Texas, and they just didn't let it happen. They tried to burn the place down one time, not while I was there, but all that stuff was going on. One other incident, of that kind, I had a guy in an advanced--I had two electives I could take in graduate school, and I took a political science elective because it had to do with economics of something. There was a guy named Bray, I'll never forget his name, I forget names but I'll never forget his name, Dr. Bray. He was a real young guy who taught this course, and I took this course because I thought that it would fit in with the economic theory that I was taking. I think it was Ronald Bray, was his name. Well, I didn't realize when I signed up for the course, but he was one of the big rebel-rousing protest leaders. He'd always be out there in front, in the big things and what have you. Of course, I never went to them so I didn't know that. But, I went to this, [it] was a one meeting a week three hour course. So, you'd meet on I think it was either Monday or Tuesday evenings. From six until nine kind of a deal, or maybe five until eight, or whenever it was. We were attending that, and I'd noticed in the class, of course I'm in civvies and he might have known I was a Marine, but he was never discourteous or anything. What was interesting in that class was that it was a graduate class, I don't think that there were more than 15 students in it, you know? But, these were all members of his cult, I mean these were all of his followers.

Q: CULT! That's a good word for it.

General Howell: Yes-- I mean these kids, they were his people, they were marching with him. And I don't think that they were there to learn anything about what he was teaching, they were just there because he was there. I figured that out after awhile and really it was one of these "moments in sports," that day of the week was the day of the Kent State killing, and we had that class that evening after those students had been killed. I'll never forget sitting in there and everybody just, "Oh, you know, talk-talk-talk-talk-talk." And Bray walks in, and he stands up and he said, "This is the beginning of the revolution! Because of what happened today the workers of the United States are going to gather with the students, and we are going to take over and revitalize this nation and overthrow the government, and really turn this place around." And they all went "YES! YES! We're going to do this! [extremely excited and motivated cheering]," and I just raised my hand. I could not resist, I said, "Are you serious?" So, he said, "Of course, I'm serious." I said, "Do you realize how stupid you are saying something like that?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Has anybody in this room ever worked with workers in the United States?" [No response] "I've worked in grocery stores. I've worked on pipelines. I've worked on road crews. I know what the workers think about you, they think that you're a bunch of spoiled PUNKS and they wouldn't SPIT on you! The workers of America don't like college students. They will never ever think of joining with you. You're full of crap. As a matter of fact, let me predict something--you know how all of these protests have gotten bigger and bigger? I predict that after Kent State the protests are going to be smaller because there are a lot of students in those protests who don't want to get shot, and the minute that happened they're going to say, 'Woo, maybe I ought to just watch it on TV, and not be out there because I might get hurt.' You just wait and see." And he just went, "uhh...uhhh...uhhhh...class dismissed." I mean, he dismissed the class [laughing].

It panned out. You know, what's interesting is later, we kept going to class and he never said much about that. But, at the end I did a paper, and I'm just waiting to see what happens. The guy gave me an "A+" on my paper and told me, he said, "You know, this is an excellent approach. You ought to think about developing this into your thesis. I'll be happy to help you on it." But, those were the two, sort of, protest events in my life on campus there. The rest of the time it was going on and most of the students went on with life and had a great time, and went to school

Q: What's interesting about it is that the military is held in such high regard today that you can't envision that happening today, but I guess it could.

General Howell: Yes.

Q: It sure could, if things changed.

General Howell: If we went back to the draft.

Q: So after you complete your masters at UT, I suppose you load up the family and head west—to Yuma, Arizona. When you get to [VMFAT-] 101, who was running 101 then?

General Howell: T.R. Moore, great guy, great American. It's funny, he had joined [VMFA] 542 as a major, who came into 542 right before I left, in Da Nang.

Q: Did he take over the squadron?

General Howell: No, he was too junior at that time. I think 101 was his first squadron, but he was a lieutenant colonel and had been an F-8 pilot, who actually had to eject on an air-refueling mission while going on a TransPac from California. Do you remember when those F-8's had too much pressure coming out of the C-130's and blew them up?

Q: Vaguely, I remember something vaguely.

General Howell: Well, he was in one of those, and had to get picked up out of the water. They had two F-8's do that in two straight days before they figured out that they had an over pressure problem coming out of the C-130.

But he was a great guy! He was an excellent pilot, too. He had many wives; T.R. had a hard time holding onto his wives. T.R. enjoyed life to its fullest.

Q: What was the situation in VMFAT-101 at that time, this being about August 1970?

General Howell: 101 was a great squadron because it had this big influx of pilots coming out of Vietnam. A lot of the instructors were very highly seasoned, both pilots and RIO's. I mean a bunch of superstars, and then the students coming in. Of course, that was the beginning—the first F-4 RAG in the Marine Corps; [VMA] 201 didn't exist at that time. And so, all the F-4 “nuggets”

came in there and there were just some superstars, guys that later really made their name: George Tullos, Bob Maddocks, Joe Anderson, all those guys came through as students. [William L.] “Spider” [Nyland] was an instructor. Gary Vangysel was an instructor, you know, I mean they were just loaded in that squadron. John Miles--he was the greatest RIO the Marine Corps ever had, and he was an instructor there.

Q: Why do you consider him the greatest?

General Howell: He was good, very knowledgeable, gave incredible lectures. John Miles was a very accomplished guy, but there wasn’t ever a better RIO than Bill Nyland in my book, and a couple others, too, that we had in 212. So, we were loaded there, but the squadron had high morale. When I got there, of course, I’d been an “ops puke” all my life and I check into the squadron as “Major Howell” now. I made major when I was down at Kingsville.

Q: They say major is sort of a turning point in a career, changes things....

General Howell: I didn’t like it, as a matter of fact, I was, a “temporary-temporary.” Were you aware of that? You know, because of the push in Vietnam and the expansion of the Marine Corps, they took a bunch of captains and ran a board for temporary majors, and they promoted a bunch of us to “temporary major.” Full pay and allowances, however, when your regular class came up for regular promotion to major they actually had another board.

Q: So, you might not really make it?

General Howell: And they had guys that didn’t.

Q: Why didn’t you like making major?

General Howell: In my mind I think captain is the best rank in the Marine Corps. I just loved it, and I felt like I got cheated because I got cheated out of about two and a half or three years as a captain; because I thought captain was great. I think the “railroad tracks” are the best looking rank that you can wear, and I just loved being a “captain of Marines,” there’s nothing better in my book, I don’t think. But, the pay was good, can’t beat that. I got paid extra for three years there that I wouldn’t have gotten paid otherwise. So, I check in and I go up to [T.R. Moore], we had known

each other from Vietnam, as a matter of fact, I chewed his ass out. He was a major and I was a captain, but we were flying up North on a mission, and it was about his third or fourth and a big huge thunderstorm is going up, and of course, were now under Air Force control so you've got to be very professional. And T.R. is coming up over on the TACC freq [frequency] saying, "Whoa! Look at those thunder hits [phonetic]! Man, those things are huge! Wow!"

You know T.R. is just T.R., he loved to bullshit. And he does it again, and I finally came on and I said, "Knock out the bullshit on Tac [frequency]!" When we got back down, I said, "Don't ever do that again. This is a professional squadron and we don't bullshit on tactical control, or anytime really!" He said, "Ok, Beak. I hear you." And I always wondered [laughing]--he never--I was salty, I was pretty salty.

Well, he treated me like a long-lost friend, and I go into his office and he said, "Well, God! It's great to have you. We're coming together, we just moved over." The squadron had really suffered, I don't know if you heard the story, you know Ron Kron, who was another great friend, had been the skipper and got into trouble for "gun-decking" logbooks of airplanes.

Q: What does that mean "gun-decking?"

General Howell: "Gun-decking," erroneous records of saying that planes were up when they weren't and all that stuff. He didn't do it, but I think he was aware of it, and he got nailed.

Q: His maintenance officer was doing it or something?

General Howell: Yes.

Q: Okay. I was wondering, before we get too far, do you know why they moved 101 out to Yuma?

General Howell: They just decided to give it new life that they needed to get it out of El Toro. You know, someone visionary said, "Let's make Yuma the training ground for Marine aviation."

Q: Smart guy.

General Howell: You're darn right, and Yuma's perfect except that it is so damn hot, but otherwise it was just a great place to fly; and I loved it. But, I checked in, and he said, "What do you want to do Beak?" I said, "You know me, I'm an old ops puke. This is a great opportunity to be an ops or

a training officer, I'd love to takeover your training and organize things." He said, "Man, that's a great idea. You're going to be the maintenance officer." [Laughing] Maybe that was his payback. I tell you, my belly knotted up, and I almost shit my pants; I'll tell you.

Q: Why didn't you want that?

General Howell: Oh, Lord, because I had heard that that squadron was on their ass. They had the oldest F-4B's in the Marine Corps, most of those birds had been in-country for two or three years and had come back--I mean there wasn't an "up" radar in the whole squadron, and in most the squadron the machines weren't up. At that time, they had just been flying FAM, no radar qualifications coming out of that. You'd go to your squadron to get your radar quals, and T.R. said, "Oh by the way, we just got a directive from DCS [deputy chief of staff] Aviation [at HQMC] that everybody coming out of the squadron now has to be "Phase II," or whatever qualified," which means that you had to have a competence in radar intercepts and that kind of stuff. So, he said, "We've got to get the radars and the systems up, and you got it. Go for it." I go down there and I'm just, "Oh my God..." The morale in the squadron, down on the maintenance deck, was awful because Dick McGann, great guy, I love "Rattler," but "Rattler" was a tough guy, just a tough guy. He had that persona and didn't give anybody any slack. He had been the maintenance officer, and he had really gotten down on the troops for whatever reason, and blamed them for everything. Every time they failed he'd said, "Well, these people are screwed up." He had moved up to group, and so people were down.

Q: What did you do to turn things around?

General Howell: I started looking at the officers I had, I've got a championship team of people there: "Skoshie" Joe Conlon, Gary "Gazelle" Vangysel, and a guy named John French, "Zeus". You just name it. I mean the officers were great. I had a brand new warrant officer, Russ Ellis, who I made into my maintenance control officer, who was just a great guy. So, I'd say, "Hey, you know we can do this!" So, I got together with the NCO's and everybody, I said, "Here's what we have to do: you know that we've got a bunch of humble airplanes, but we're going to come up with a plan, and one-at-a-time we're going to get these suckers up; and we've got to fly them. We're going to fly machines and then we're going to develop systems, and eventually we're going to hit a critical mass where it will all come together. It's not going to be easy, but we can do this. Here is what I'll promise you: that any failures that happen on this maintenance deck, will be my failures.

Nobody below the maintenance officer will ever get the blame for anything that goes wrong here, I guarantee you. You might not believe it now, but you'll find that out from me. All that I'm demanding from you is to give your very best and let's get these birds turned around, and I'll give you all the support I can; and we'll do what we can." And these guys turned-to and I was really proud of them. John French, who's a brilliant guy, Stanford graduate, had read about the Navy on the East Coast for their brand-new F-14's having what they call an "integrated weapons systems review [IWSR]." They had a lot of problems with the AWG-10 radar and the Phoenix missile.

So, they did an integrated weapons systems review where they brought in a team of civilian experts from Point Magu, and some other places, and set up a special line and basically ripped apart the airplanes and put them back together and got their systems going. So, I go to skipper and I say, "We'd like to do this," and then he said, "Man, if you can, do it. I'll back you up." So, we went up to Magu and got them to volunteer to come down with a team of specialists and we guaranteed that we would have a team of Marines dedicated to them, and we took one bird at a time down to an old beat-up hangar, down at the end of the line there at Yuma, that was vacant. We set up an IWSR there. They'd only guarantee, they said, "If we're going to do this you have to guarantee at this time that you're going to bring these airplanes to Magu and shoot missiles off of them; we've got to have a missile shoot to prove it." Then, I said, "We'll do it." So, when all was said and done we ended up getting 15 airplanes, and we had 35 or 36 airplanes. We got 15 aircraft totally through this IWSR, and got them to Magu. While there, we had 13 successful "Sparrow" shots and "Sidewinders" and used all four missile stations. It really panned out, and what that does is that it really enhances the competence of your Marines; your avionics Marines, your weapons Marines, and your radar Marines. They all learn from these guys, and so they start applying that to all the other airplanes. We got these things going again and got a lot pride, and then all the sudden, things are working out. They were still old beat up machines, and the biggest problem we had initially was the wiring, the potting and the plugs, which were just crumbling; I mean they were just coming apart.

Q: Corrosion control.

General Howell: Corrosion control and mush, I mean you'd break open a big multi-plug and they would just crumble in your hands. And so, we had to do a "re-pot" all these things and little-by-little we turned it around. You know, I got there in January or February and we were approaching the 4th of July, Russ Ellis, the maintenance control officer, comes up to me and he says, "Hey boss, take a look at this, we think that we're going to have over 20 airplanes up by the 1st of July. Why

don't we have a big massive flyover to celebrate the 4th for 101?" So, I go the skipper, I go to T.R. and I say, "Hey, I think that we can do this. We'd like to do this." And he goes, "You've come to the right place. I have it envisioned, we are going to have a 'diamond of diamonds' 16 plane flyover and we'll have two or three airborne backups. We'll go right down Main Street of Yuma, Arizona." I led the right division there; T.R. Moore is in the lead.

Q: Wow, nice, nice spacing [looking at General Howell's picture of the formation].

General Howell: Oh, it was a great success. So, the group commander, who he had warned that we were going to do that, was standing out there watching this and he said, "That's a great idea. We're going to do this for the Marine Corps' birthday except, we're going to have all the squadrons do it." We had two A-4 training squadrons, we had a two-seat instrument training squadron, and then a tactical training squadron out there at that time. So, we had to really struggle to get 16 airplanes up for the Marine Corps' Birthday. I mean that this was one of these times when you just had them all up.

We got it done for November the tenth, but that day the plane I'm flying--my flaps are wired up, I couldn't even go half-flaps on those things because they were just broken. They had a broken hydraulic control.

Q: You're the maintenance officer so you're going to take that one.

General Howell: Yes, so I took that one, and Joe Conlon, who was the power plant officers, he had a bird where anytime you moved the throttle just a little bit the left engine would flame-out. I mean every time it would flame-out, and you would have to restart it. He did that the whole damn hop.

Q: He was restarting it the whole time?

General Howell: Yes, he was restarting the engine all the time. But, we got it and we did it. They have movies of this big huge MCCRTG-10 [Marine Combat Crew Readiness Training Group] fly-over, over Yuma.

Q: The A-4's were there, too?

General Howell: They were there, they led, and the big problem was that the group commander had to maintain constant airspeed otherwise you'd get into one of these things [making accordion gesture with hands] and we got into it. You had formations under-flying other formations and all that shit, but got through it then. Of course, bringing them all back into the base at the same, you know you had almost 50 airplanes airborne at that time, so we had LSO's [landing signal officers] out on the runways controlling. We did sort of a staggered--so everybody would get in, and did it safely. Then, we had a big Marine Corps Birthday celebration that night.

Of course, 101-- see I didn't tell the skipper or anybody, the maintenance department knew what we had, but we didn't tell them that we had a problem with the airplane. So, that night the LSO, a guy named "Doc" Tyson, who is now called John Tyson -- he didn't like to be called "Doc" -- he was the squadron LSO and he graded all of our landings. So, at the big dinner that night, T.R. says, "Doctor Tyson, please stand up and give all the grades for the landing-sweepstakes," thank you." So, he goes down the list, "Well, Bengazzo was okay. So-and-so was a little fast. So-and-so was a little...." So, he comes to "Howell" and he said, "[takes a deep breath] Fast and high all the way, too fast, landing long and fast," and everybody goes, "Ah ha ha ha, you're a 'hamburger [phonetic]'. I just sat there gritting my teeth because...

Q: No flaps [laughing].

General Howell: I didn't have any flaps.

Q: What about the young guys coming in like Tullos and Maddocks, that went on to be outstanding leaders and fighter pilots?

General Howell: They were students. They were great students, and they were good at what they did.

Q: Did they stand out?

General Howell: At VT-21, and also at Yuma, they come in groups. It's really funny how you will have one gaggle who are just great, and you'll have another gaggle that are okay, then you'll have a gaggle that are just sorry. They seem to come in waves. The group that we had at that time, and I'm trying to think of some of the other guys, they were just great; I mean these guys were good. They made it fun, and you could take them on cross-countries. I'll never forget, Joe "J.T."

Anderson, the retired two-star who's got the Smithsonian out at Dulles right now, he was a student then; but he later went to Harriers. I took him on a cross-country to Florida, I guess to MacDill [Air Force Base].

My old buddy, Doyle Baker, was in the Air Force flying in the 94th Fighter Squadron down there, and I let him know that we were coming with two F-4's. We come into the break, and of course, in the Air Force in those days before a poor guy could get into the front of an F-4 he had to spend at least 500 hours in the back. So, we land there and Baker's out there with a guy, who was the General's son, and he sort of brought him into the squadron and was a backseater. So, we were walking in from the airplanes and I said, "Joe tell them how much time you have in the F-4." He said, "18 hours." Then, the backseater said, "You're in the front seat?" And Joe said, "Oh yeah, that's the way we do it in the Marine Corps." It was funny. That guy was great. So, we really had a great group of guys and had some great parties.

We had a Southeast Asia Party that was just INCREDIBLE! We put out published things in the paper that were hilarious and almost got the squadron CO relieved of command.

Q: What kind of paper?

General Howell: It was the *Cactus Comet* or whatever?

Q: Yes, the Yuma base paper.

General Howell: Yes, I framed this [showing Dr. Allison a framed newspaper clipping]. We lampooned them, they [A-4 pilots] they always teased us because they out flew us. The F-4's broke all the time, and students would see things like an instructor would take a bird that a student would see something wrong with, "Sir, I have fluctuating oil pressure." "Take it back." You know you'd never tell them, but you'd take it if it was you.

So, they teased us. They put a thing in the *Cactus Comet* saying, "Hey, we fly! What do you do?" So, our guys put together this thing called, "Tinker Talk: Attack Lampoon." It's got some great articles in it, I mean it's just hilarious. You know: "Local A-4 Squadron Completes SATS Quals" -- association with Kolansky." These were our guys who did that. We actually put it in the paper, the real Yuma paper, the back page of the Yuma paper. We actually bought a half of a page.

Q: *Yuma Daily Sun*

General Howell: Yes, and the base commander saw that and just had a baby.

Q: Was he an A-4 pilot, attack pilot?

General Howell: He just thought that it put the Marines in a bad light. He was right [whispering]. T.R. Moore almost got relieved of command. But, we thought that it was hilarious [laughing], and these were guys that we had.

It was hilarious, and the antics we had, there was a local stripper who was renowned for being a very large, voluptuous woman, "Tiger Lil". She would give shows out in town at the VFW and what have you. We would go to these things and watch her perform. She was really just a hero of the area, everyone talked about "Tiger Lil." So, we were having this Southeast Asia Party, that we were sponsoring, and everybody had to dress up in Vietnam flight suits, and we had "piss-tubes" like you'd use in Vietnam, and all that. I mean, it was a great show. We put on a great show, and the maintenance department put this thing together. We advertised that Tiger Lil was going to perform, and everybody was just excited, "Wow! Really?" "Yeah, we've got Tiger Lil coming." The base commander, and then group commander, told T.R. that they wanted to see him. They said, "If she performs at the club, then you're squadron is going to be grounded and you're going to be relieved of command." T.R. came to me and I said, "Don't worry skipper, we won't do that to you." But, we kept it going, and Gary Vangysel, he had airframes and Conlon had power plants. Well, he dresses up as a stripper with a wig, boobs, and all that. We had gotten her songs that she used, and we had it dark in there. He comes out, the guys had flashlights, and they start the song and he starts dancing around with bare feet and toenails [phonetic]. They've got flashlights on his legs and they'd go, "it's Tiger Lil." They'd come up and it Vangysel. It was just hilarious. So, it was just a great.

Q: Vangysel's name comes up a lot.

General Howell: Yes, well he had the group there at Beaufort. He had a wonderful career in the Marine Corps. He got in trouble, he was flying the F-18, he was the guy that had the oxygen tube that broke right by his butt, and froze his left hip. I mean he had permanent damage and had to have his hip replaced. He was never the same after that.

Q: I never knew that.

General Howell: When he was flying “Hornets” there at Beaufort. Yes, he did a great job. So, these were the kind of guys we had, and they were great. So, it was a great experience, but then the truth finally comes out. I’m there for about six months and then I get a warning from Headquarters, “You’re going back to WestPac.” I realized the reason that they had my payback at Yuma was to get me re-Fam’d in the F-4, so they could send me back to WestPac.

Q: So, that was your payback?

General Howell: Well, actually the payback was going to the Naval Academy, but they just delayed it. I didn’t know that I was going to go there, but all the sudden I got orders back to WestPac. Now, the Marines were pulling out of Vietnam at that time.

Q: Yes, now we’re moving into ’72.

General Howell: Yes, ’72 and we’re just having a great time at Yuma. I’m working like crazy, but loving it. I just loved that experience. I loved the flying, a lot of flying, but working with those Marines and having 300 maintenance Marines just busting their butts. Really, you know, they’re just great.

Q: How much did your experience as an infantry officer help in that situation, leadership techniques?

General Howell: I think I used all the experience. I think that it maybe gave me just a confidence of working with a group of men that I knew would come along with me. I don’t think that the techniques were any different. I had learned to be understanding and “teacher-mentor” kind of stuff, and not “hard-ass.” At the same time, I realized early on though that when you set certain standards, you’ve got to maintain them. You’ve got to set that example and demand that other people maintain it, too. So I always, no matter where I went, I always expected our people to be at a higher level and to strive to be better than they might be. I think that that always pays off, but you’ve got to work at it. You can’t accept people backing out. You find out that some guys can’t handle it. Some guys are not as good as other guys. The secret then, with them, is to find a place for them. A place where they can contribute even though they aren’t quite as qualified as other people. Instead of shaming them, find a place for them where they can be comfortable, do well,

still work hard, and still contribute to the good of everybody. So, I sort of learned those things, and I think that that helped. But, I'll never forget, Friday afternoons the squadron is shutting down and everybody is going to Happy Hour but we're trying to get the cross-countries out. That was always a big challenge because we would launch 10 to 11 cross-countries for the weekend. We'd kill a lot of time and those old F-4B's, sure-as-shineola a couple of them would break and the guys would abort and have to come in. You thought that you had them all gone and then you get a call, "so-and-so is coming back. He's got a hydraulic problem or an engine problem. Do we have another airplane?" "Well, we're trying to get one up..." and I'd always stick around there with the troops. I'd stay on that flight-line until that last bird was out, and then bringing in the fire extinguishers and shutting the hangar door. Just standing there, along with all those other Marines who'd been working their butts off while most of the people are gone, and just having that satisfaction. Some of the most satisfying moments of your life are being with a group of men who just worked their tails off, they're exhausted, but you got the job done.

I'd usually be real late at Happy Hour. I hardly ever got to a Happy Hour, it was probably over by the time I got there; but it was a great experience. So, those are those wonderful moments that you never forget. So, when I got orders back to WestPac--I knew Tom Duffy, we'd been in [VMFA-] 531 together. He was a former Air Force pilot who had transitioned to the Marine Corps. He'd been a tanker pilot and wanted to be a fighter guy and the Air Force wouldn't let him. So, he transferred to the Marine Corps and became an F-4 pilot; great guy. He had been in Vietnam, I can't remember what squadron it was, when we were at Chu Lai; he was over there then, too. Well, he was over in WestPac in VMFA-115, he was the XO. So, I wrote him a letter and I said, "Hey Tom, I'm coming and I think that I'm a pretty good maintenance officer, so if you're looking for a maintenance officer in VMFA-115 I'd love to be in your squadron." I knew that there were all kinds of jobs at the Wing where they might grab you, as a major.

Q: Where did the family go?

General Howell: In those days when you went overseas unaccompanied you could send your family wherever they wanted to go PCS; and move them there. Janel did not want to go back to Atlanta. She had fallen in love with Austin, and so she invited my mother, a widow, to come stay with her. She wanted to go back to Austin with the kids, and live there for the year. So, we found a house for rent in Austin and I drove the dog. She flew with the kids to Austin and we met there. We're moving in, got the moving van there, first thing you do is plug in the old portable television, and there's Walter Cronkite – it's one of those things that you'll never forget – Walter Cronkite

saying, “There’s a massive invasion coming across the DMZ of North Vietnamese regulars, the Vietnamese are being pushed back severely. Their advisors are trying to rally them. The President has ordered both, the Air Force and Marine tactical squadrons back into country to help stop it.”

Q: That would be the Easter Invasion, March 30, 1972.

General Howell: Yes, and I’m thinking I’m going to be back in-country.

Q: You already knew that you were headed that way though, no?

General Howell: No.

Q: Oh, you were just going to WestPac?

General Howell: Yes. Actually it’s funny in those days. [1st] Wing Headquarters was up in Iwakuni [Japan] in those days, and that’s where the fighter guys were. I thought that I was going to Iwakuni, and so I get on a troop transport. There were still big movements, on charters, out of El Toro. I got on one of those things on a Sunday evening, with a bunch of other guys, and we head west.

Q: What did you think about leaving the family again?

General Howell: Now, not only did I have a son, but my little daughter, too; and she’s only a little over one year old. Boy, I just thought, “I was really lucky the last time and I made it. This time I wonder if my luck has run out.” I cried on that trip; in the dark, heading over, silently I cried because I was just so afraid that I was never going to see my little girl again. That really bothered me.

I get over there, you know I had to go through five different places, and I end up at Iwakuni getting off an airplane there, and there’s the Wing adjutant waiting: “Get all field grade over here, company grade that way, go with that guy and he’ll tell you where you are going.” He comes over to the field grade and he said, “Okay, we’ve got Major Joe you’re going to be the Wing Special Services Officer. So-and-so you’re the Assistant Wing S-1 and so on. Howell don’t unpack, you’re going to Da Nang.” So, I know that I’m heading back to a squadron and so I’m thinking, “Well, I asked for it.”

Q: You're having second thoughts?

General Howell: Well, I asked for it and I said, "If somebody's got to be in-country, I want to be with them." That night in Iwakuni, I couldn't get out of there for a couple days to get transportation, I go over to the club at Iwakuni; and there's a guy, I'm not going to mention his name, who I flew with in [VMFA-] 542 who had been down there and came out. He said, "Beak, I got out of there as quickly as I could. It's a different war, they've got radar-controlled triple-A [anti-aircraft artillery]. They've got ZSU-23-4's [self-propelled, radar guided, anti-aircraft weapons system]. We got people getting the shit shot out of them. I mean it's dangerous. They needed a liaison [officer], so I volunteered and got out of there. You don't want to go down there." So, I just looked at him and I said, "Harry, those are our guys down there." He said, "Yes, but..." I said, "Okay, I hear you." I just knew at that time that I just had to go, and so it's funny, you know, I had that lump in my gut. But, get in the old Marine transport and end up landing at Da Nang. It's funny, coming off the C-130, the MarLog [Marine logistics flight] they called it, you know had to go through that. And as I am getting off the airplane, and still just-- I'm just really down, and I look out there and there's Joe Conlon, Jim Ballard, Harry Lee, and about four other guys that I'd been with in Vietnam, but the last time. They were all standing there with a big shit-eating grin on their faces, "C'mon Beak!!!" I get off the plane on to the flight line and I laugh, and I said, "Well, here we go again!" They said, "Yes, here we go again!" Then, "Hey, let's go do it!"

Q: You go to VMFA-115, what was the situation with them, were you the maintenance officer?

General Howell: Kent McFerren was the skipper, real dignified quiet fellow. By the way, Tom Duffy had been killed about three weeks before I got there. He had gotten into a mid-air collision on a take-off. He had a mid-air collision with a Vietnamese observation plane, and didn't make it. So, he was dead. He said, "Tom recommended you highly. You're going to be my maintenance officer."

Q: What kind of condition were they [F-4s] in—maintenance-wise?

General Howell: I get checked into VMFA-115, 115 is a great squadron, but they'd come in there in a hurry and they were flying a lot of missions. I was very concerned when I saw their operation, how dangerous they were; just the way that they were doing things and they were flying aircraft

that really needed maintenance. They weren't doing a regular maintenance program, and I sort of stood on it, I said, "You've got a great operation. You're doing the right things. You're doing combat, but combat doesn't keep you from maintaining your aircraft and keeping them safe for you. You guys are letting these things go..." So, I sort of set my foot down. So, I take over that and all the sudden, "Vrrrrppppppp [phonetic]!", and the airplanes go down quick. I think the guys are saying, "You know this guy's a little [uptight, bossy??? Taken from context], we'll show him."

So, we're really having a hard time making our FRAG and I start flying with them. We're suffering and we're missing some launches, and canceling some things and having a hard time putting the afternoon launch together. It's really funny, this is going on for two or three weeks, and I'm seeing us making some progress. I'm seeing that things are coming together, but we're still struggling. Ken McFerren did me a great favor. I don't think he knew it at the time, but maybe he did; he was a smart guy. He comes to me, he walks up to me when we were down on the flight line, right around noon when there was a lot of activity. There were a couple of guys standing around and he said, "Hey Beak, how we doing?" I said, "We're not doing well, Skipper. As a matter of fact we're going to have a hard time putting together six airplanes to make the afternoon FRAG." He said, "Well, I noticed that you're on the flight schedule." I said, "Yes sir." And he said, "I'll tell you what, you're the maintenance officer right?" I said, "Yes sir." He said, "I think you maybe ought to stay off the flight schedule until you get all these airplanes up and get them flying again." And basically what he was saying was, "You're grounded, ASSHOLE! Fix the airplanes!" I said "Aye-Aye sir." He walks off and I'm thinking, "Oh boy, I'm screwed!" But, Rick Adams, who was one of my maintenance control officers, great guy, he overhears that and the word gets around that, "the AMO [aircraft maintenance officer] has been grounded by the skipper because the airplanes are down." They just said, "We aren't going to let him stay grounded for long!" Pride took over, and he [Rick] actually came in there and ripped off his wings, and said, "I ain't flying again until you fly!" You know, one of these things, and I said, "No, you're going to fly like you're ordered to fly. We will get this done." And it brought the guys together and in a couple of days, marvelous things happened. We started getting with it, it was sort of coming that way anyways, but this sort of jazzed things up. We got that air force put back together and we were doing well. So, it didn't take long and I was flying again.

Q: When and how did you get word you were going to be moving to Thailand, the Rose Garden?

General Howell: Lo-and-behold, in comes the news that, "We're moving you out of here."

Basically, the deal was that Nixon had said that he was, "Pulling all the U.S. forces out." Then,

here he is putting forces in. He said, “We’ve got to get all these people out of there.” So, all the Air Force squadrons just moved over to Thailand, to all the Air Force bases. “Well, what are we going to do with these Marines?” “Well, we’ve got this neat little place call Nam Phong [sarcastic tone].”

They would not tell us what it was or what the name of it was, but they said, “It’s a secret base with not much there now, but we have a strong contingent of Sea Bees over there right now building your base for you. So, when you get there it’s going to be fully built with quarters and everything operating. It’s just going to be like going from one place to the other, no sweat! You’ll have ‘lift support [phonetic]’ and all that stuff.”

Q: And the situation really was---

General Howell: It was a LIE!!! It was all awful! We ended up, the day we moved, when they had finally told us where it was and gave us a TACAN to fly to. So, we could find the darn thing, actually they had an approach plate written in pencil, you know if there was weather, to get into that place. They did put in an expeditionary SATS GCA kind of thing, and those guys did well. But, the weather ended up being ok anyways. But, we scheduled all of our airplanes for that day. We had all of our airplanes up that day, loaded, flew a combat mission in Vietnam, and then bingo’ed over to Nam Phong from there.

Q: I’m showing you took 15 airplanes over there.

General Howell: Fifteen airplanes flew it, yes.

Q: That’s something that is always mentioned, its even mentioned in our *Official History of the Vietnam War*.

General Howell: I didn’t know that. I was very proud of that. I flew and led the last section out of there. We hit a target and got over there.

Q: You had flaps this time I hope?

General Howell: Yes, I did, the airplane was good and I had a good mission.

Q: How did it compare as far as a dangerous environment compared to your previous tour, as the guy in the club had warned?

General Howell: Oh, it was.

Q: The enemy was really shooting at you there?

General Howell: It was "Big Time." It was a whole new ballgame. When you look at the whole thing, the whole history of the Vietnam War, and people ask me, "What was it like in Vietnam?" You know, Vietnam was different to every guy or gal that went over there, depending on where you were and what kind of combat you were in. When you talk about Vietnam, it's the blind men describing an elephant, because it was so different in everything. Then, for me, my experience at Chu Lai and Da Nang initially, and then what I found four years later was just a whole new ballgame. I mean these guys had armored divisions down there. They had big quad ZSU-23 radar guided, self-propelled triple-A; they had nests of these things down there. They had 37 mm and 87 mm triple-A, it was heavy stuff. So, we learned very quickly that people who made multiple runs get shot down. I mean, you don't get hit, you get shot down! The Intel [Intelligence] guys ran statistics and they told us that, "95 percent of the guys who get shot down are on their second, or more, run." So, we laid down some fast, hard rules of, "Anytime you are against heavy triple-A it's 'one pass and haul ass'." You could only take one pass, but the kicker on this thing, in the old times the FAC was trolling around at 3,000 feet or 1,500 feet and marking targets; I mean right on them, "Hit my mark!" You know, you would really get upset if the guy said anything but, "Hit my mark," because that's how good they were. But now, you've got these guys who now had to be above 8,000 feet, or else they get nailed. The enemy had the Estrella, shoulder-fired SAM's [surface-to-air missile]; SA-7's, those things were very effective, particularly against slow-movers.

Q: Did you ever have some shot at you?

General Howell: I did, and we were popping flares. You know, we got very tactical and it took my flare. It's one of these where I was in a run, pulled off, and the FAC said, "You've got a SAM--it got the flare!" It was just that quick, "You've got a SAM on you -- it hit the flare!" Thank God, you know that the RIO was on the ball. The RIO was the guy who put out the flares after you pulled out. So, those kinds of things were going on. So, triple-A, the ZSU-23 was really the most dangerous thing because of all that lead. Around Laos, we flew a lot of missions. We flew up

North. When we got over to Nam Phong it became a very complex. But, it was a challenge and I felt very good about the way we met the challenge.

Q: Can you describe the routine mission from there?

General Howell: Basically, our typical launch was to brief for a target, usually in the I Corps area, again in support of Vietnamese troops initially. Then, as we drove them back and stopped them, we started flying a lot more missions along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. Then, we began to fly up in the Plain de Jars in Laos, which is up in the mountains of Laos, those are really interesting.

Q: Those are both when you were based in Da Nang, and in Nam Phong?

General Howell: Well, Da Nang was almost everything in I Corps, but once we went to Nam Phong a lot of our missions went elsewhere. And then, we'd been there a month or so, and the Air Force is really hurting for tactical support of their strikes that they were having up North. They came to the Marine Corps and said, "Can you help us out?" Well, at that time we had two F-4 squadrons. We had an F-4J squadron, VMFA-232, and the F-4B squadron VMFA-115. The Navy was making a big push to take the J's away from the Marine Corps, because they were running out of airplanes and they needed them for their cruises out on Yankee Station. The Marines were fighting to hold on to their J's. The trouble was that that AWG-10 radar was a bitch to keep up, particularly out in the jungle because it was so hot. They burn them up maintaining [working on] them. So, the Marine Corps found an answer and said to the Air Force, "Yes, we will support you." And they assigned the J's to join the Air Force on their Linebacker strikes up North. That just infuriated us, because our radars were up; man we had "up" systems. I had every Sparrow missile station tuned up, we really had good birds.

Q: What were conditions in Nam Phong like?

General Howell: We got there, and I tell you that it wasn't easy in Nam Phong because Nam Phong was a mess. When we got over there, there was no place for us to live. The only thing the Sea Bees had built was their own camp, so we were actually living on the flight line. It wasn't really their fault because they were using local lumber, which was all teakwood, and for every nail that they drove in they bent about eight or nine nails. They couldn't saw it, I mean the saws were burned up and ruined very quickly because the wood was so hard. The Sea Bees just had a fit

trying to build that camp, and it slowed them down. They ran out of equipment. The Air Force support of moving us over there was not half of what they had promised. We had a lot of stuff just dumped out on the end of the flight-line. A lot of our supplies were just dumped out in the rain, just nothing but ruined avionics gear and everything in a big pile. It was just a mess.

Q: How soon did you start flying out of there?

General Howell: The night I get there, I am one of the last guys to land there, and they say, "We've got a FRAG. They're taking it easy, only 12 sorties tomorrow; six in the morning and six in the afternoon." I said, "How many do we have up?" They said, "Three." So, I said, "Well, let's get to work." And they replied, "Well, we don't have any electricity." So, there was no electricity. There were no parts, except what our maintenance people brought in their pockets; stuff they knew that they would need and in their own cabinets. I'll never forget, walking down the flight line; it's pitch black and there is no light, no electricity, so people have kerosene lanterns out there trying to work on the airplanes. I walk up and I see this glow in the night, and they had brought a company of ground Marines to provide security, and I've got a young Marine rifleman leaning up against an F-4 external fuel tank smoking a cigarette [Laughing]. I said, "Young man, do you understand what you're doing?" And so, we squared them away. I had some great guys, and I need to look in this book. I'm trying to remember my maintenance control chief was just a great guy. That guy had worked all the night before getting the birds up to get over there, they worked all that day, and finally he turned it over to the night crew; but we only had about three airplanes up. So, I walked up and I'm seeing that, and I'm frustrated. The night crew, they were good guys, but they weren't that good. They were a little weak, and I needed him. I'll never forget walking back, they had these Butler buildings along the flight line and our maintenance was down under, in the bottom floor. They had us living above it. In our 115 Butler building we had the troops, enlisted, up above it. The next building over was 232 and they had the same thing. Then, they had another, they had a supply Butler building; above it was the Staff NCO's [Non-Commissioned Officers]. The last one down the line, I think it was an avionics Butler, and above it was the officers' country. They had us living---it looked like Auschwitz, I mean you'd go up in this thing and it had these tiny little cubicles. They were just settled [phonetic] where could crawl in there and lay down on a sleeping bag, and that was your hooch. That was it, there was no place else. That's where we stayed. We were there for a month before they built us some Southeast Asia huts, for us to live in.

Q: So, you had just a little compartment that you would slide into to sleep?

General Howell: That was it. In the beginning, there was no running water and no electricity. It was unsanitary. We didn't have any potable, drinkable, water for a day or two. We had to drink beer; that was the only thing we had that we could drink. Some local guy brought in some Sing Ha [phonetic] beer until we finally got shipments of potable water to drink. I didn't take a regular shower for at least three weeks. We used to wait for a thunderstorm, get out there naked, soap down there in the thunderstorm, and wash off. That was the only way to bathe. It was unbelievable.

Q: Truly expeditionary.

General Howell: Yes, it was. I compare it to Guadalcanal, but of course we didn't have anybody shooting at us. But, I'm really proud of these guys because they did it anyways.

Q: Did you make the launch the next day?

General Howell: I made the launch, but what happened was--and the reason that I've got to find his name because he's such a great American and a great Marine--I went up to him, I'm walking down this flight line and I'm exhausted. It's about eight o'clock that night. I hadn't eaten. I was trying to find where I was going to stay. I'm disgusted because of what I found there, and these guys are scrambling, and he's sitting out--these Butler buildings were two stories and they had just a wooden stairway down from the second deck to out in front, that came down. He's sitting out there in front of that Butler building smoking a cigarette and I look at him. Sibley, Gunny Sibley, I said, "Gunny." And he said, "Hey boss [exhaustedly spoken]." He said, "It's been a heck of a day [exhaustedly spoken]." I said, "Gunny, you know how many planes we have up?" He said, "Well, I know that we don't have enough [expressed with sense of guilt]." I said, "Well, what are we going to do about it?" He said, "Well, I've got the night crew working on it." All of the sudden, I said, "Do you think they're going to be able to get it done?" He said, "I'm mighty tired Boss. It's been a long night and day to get here [extreme tone of exhaustion and defeat]." I said, "I know, but do you think that we're going to get those birds up?" He said, "Well, what do you want me to do about it?" I said, "Let your conscious be your guide." And then I walked off [laughing]. That poor guy, you know, he's down there an hour later working, and they got the birds up. That's the kind of guy he was. I'm a jerk, but we had to get it done, and he was the guy that could get it done. He did just a great, great job. These were the kind of guys that we had.

Q: Well, they are. The maintenance troops are just fantastic. What were some particular challenges you faced at Nam Phong?

General Howell: In Nam Phong they had all kinds of obstacles. Not only was it just impossible, but the situation was that it was a Royal Thai Base. So, the Thai's still owned it and they had their own security force there. Every one of those security guys had a big pack of heroin in one pocket, and a big packet of marijuana in the other, selling it to our troops. The CI, counter-intelligence figured that out quick and then NIS [naval investigative services]. The first time that they tried to arrest one of those guys they almost got killed because those guys belonged to the King of Thailand, and they were not allowed to touch a Thai troop; they belonged to the Thais. So, they told them, "You don't mess with our people!" So, we had to deal with that situation the whole time that we were there. The drug problem was awful. Seeing our troops, good kids, but they're American youth of that day. They had come out of Da Nang where they were getting shot at. We were getting hit almost every night with rockets and everything. There were very few nights that went by in Da Nang where we didn't have to roll out of the rack, with a helmet and flak jacket on. Then, get into a bunker because the siren would ring and then a few would whack in there or wham in there. So, the troops were all getting combat pay in Da Nang. When we went over to Thailand it was a non-combat zone. So, the pilots are still getting combat pay because we are flying into combat, but the troops had their combat pay cutout. So, these guys are getting a pay cut, it wasn't as exciting, they're restricted to base, they're not allowed to go into the town of Nam Phong.

Q: How far away was that? Was that nearby?

General Howell: I never went there. I think it was about 10 or 15 miles away. Finally, after a month we did get an R&R [rest & recuperation] run up to Udorn, where a bus would come in and a certain number of guys could go and get on the bus. Then, you'd get to go spend one night; you got to spend a day and a half. So, you'd spend that night, get a whole day, and then get a half a day and come back. So, once every 17 days you could go up there on R&R. That's how it ran. Everybody got to do that. That was the R&R, go up to Udorn and get into a hotel, take a hot bath, see a movie, go shopping, go drinking, and that was typical; but that was it. Nam Phong just sucked! Nam Phong was awful. Ended up getting a mess hall going, but they weren't able to get the water hot enough to wash the dishes, so people started getting dysentery and all kinds of terrible diseases. So, they ended up after several weeks realizing that they were making everybody

in the camp sick. So, they went to paper plates and plastic spoons to try and cut that. I mean half the group was sick. I got sicker than heck, everybody got sick. I had a guy named Rick Krisiean [sic], great guy, got spinal meningitis and almost died. They had to MedEvac him. I mean there were serious, serious problems there and yet we kept going. Ken McFerren left quickly after that, it was time for him to rotate home, and we got in a guy named "The Clipper."

Q: That would be Henry Ivy.

General Howell: Henry "Hank" Ivy, a great leader; another champion. Ivy was another great combat leader, and he held that squadron together. After he'd been there a few months, he got all the officers together and said "It's unrealistic for us to believe that we're going to keep all of our troops from taking these drugs. If we go on a witch hunt and really search hard, we'll probably catch all of them and we'll never fly again. So, let's try to educate them. If we see any flagrant cases, or observe any of it, we'll arrest them and we'll take care of business. But, let's try to get combat knowledge flowing to them and just understand what we're dealing with; that we have a group of people here, on the edge. Let's just be as careful as we can. Let's try to get the job done and try to help them keep from doing something bad, instead of going after them." So, that's sort of the approach he took. Another thing he did, too, was at that time [VMFA] 232 was really struggling trying to maintain systems for these Linebacker escorts. Finally, I think Ivy had an influence because he and General Les Brown, who was the Wing commander, were old squadron mates. I think he talked to him, and convinced him, that they ought to let 115 into the game. So, we got into the Linebacker game and it was very exciting.

Q: Why is that? What type of operations were they?

General Howell: Man, oh yeah, we had to really do a lot of ACM training for our people, on the side. We were keeping our air-to-ground going, but we really had to work hard on getting our missiles up. By that time, we'd turned a corner where the MAG, MAG-15 was there, and was starting to get supplies in. We got in some big maintenance vans and avionics vans to help tune Sparrow missiles and what have you; we got some help on that. I think my experience, and the experience of some of our guys, with the IWSR where we went to the CO and the group commander and we said, "These are things--if you can get us this kind of help, get us some civilians in here, and we can really get these systems going. We're really going to need that kind of help." And they got them in there, and the next thing we knew we were starting to launch

missions at least twice a week. On these missions we would join big Air Force--the Air Force in those days--this was before the B-52's were making the big strikes.

Q: Like the Christmas bombings?

General Howell: Yes, that shut down the North. This was prior to that, it was still Linebacker, but it was literally hundreds of Air Force tactical aircraft going North on strikes. Sometimes they'd have 125 or 150 aircraft going North together, and they'd strike a target. They'd have a MiG sweep go ahead in front of them, and then they'd strike a target with escorts. Then, they'd have sweeps after them. Then, of course, you had all the tankers [aerial refueling planes] tanking all these guys.

Q: And you guys got to be a part of that?

General Howell: We got to be a part of it, and it was exciting as heck. We had our own tankers, we had C-130's there at Nam Phong and these guys did great jobs. Basically, we would normally launch a four-plane division to go into North Vietnam, but we'd launch six to cover four and we'd have eight turning to see which birds were the best to send.

Q: With good missiles, all armed up, ready to fight, air-to-air?

General Howell: Yes, we had all the Sparrow missiles tuned up.

Q: Did you go up with "four and four [four Sparrow missiles and four Sidewinders]?"

General Howell: "Four and four," with three external tanks. I mean we were loaded. There airplanes rolling down that runway would be at max gross weight. I mean it was always just getting it off the ground and not blowing a tire on takeoff. You know, those little old F-4B's had those tiny little tires. But they did it. Our guys did an incredible job getting those birds ready.

We would launch six and they'd head North. They would tune up the missile right before. The tankers would get out ahead of us and they'd have three tankers up there. They would go up to the tankers in northern Laos, close to the North Vietnamese border. If you look at a map of Laos, it was up close to the Black River. The tankers would be up in the area just north and west of the Plain de Jars; or maybe sometimes directly over the Plain de Jars. All the Air Force birds that

came out would tank over Laos, too; before they'd make their run. So, they would be tanking off of [C-] 135's, up high. We'd be down with our C-130's at 10, 12, or 16 thousand feet. We would be tanking down low with them. So, we would launch up there, meet the tankers, figure out which were the best birds to go, and then send two home without tanking. Then, we'd tank all four aircraft and head north. Then, the tankers would drain one tanker and then have the other two with some left. They'd send the empty one back to Udorn, or the closest base, to get more fuel and come back. Basically our mission, they had a bunch of "Spook" aircraft. They were the old Super-Constellations [EC-121], and they were flying out of some base in Thailand. They would fly up and be listening to all the activities in North Vietnam during these strikes. They'd be listening to their people taxiing, taxiing their aircraft, launching aircraft, their SAM sites, recording all that, and they could put out warnings that, "MiG is airborne out of Phuket," or what have you, and all that kind of stuff. So, our job was really to fly a BarCAP [barrier combat air patrol] in front of those "Spooks." That was our job, to provide [security].

Q: Where were your patrols?

General Howell: We were normally just north of Laos. However, what got exciting was that as the Air Force got more comfortable with us, they were really struggling to get enough tankers out of SAC [Strategic Air Command]. SAC owned all the tankers, and the B-52's always took priority over TAC [Tactical Air Command]. So, sometimes they have a big 150 airplane strike planned, but only have enough tankers for 75 of them; so they had to cut it in half. A lot of times, when they'd make their run up there, if somebody got into trouble they didn't have any backup tankers for them. So, if somebody went down and "Jolly Green" went up, then they needed a high cover over "Jolly Green." They didn't have anybody that could stay up there because they didn't have enough gas, but we were up there with our tankers. So, we could always go back and get more gas. So, on more than one occasion, if somebody got shot down and "Jolly Green" went up, the Marine F-4's would go North and provide a high cover over the "Jolly Green" guys trying to go in. I got to do that a couple of times, and it was very exciting. That was the only time that I ever saw Hanoi was on one of those missions.

Q: Were these mostly daylight missions?

General Howell: Daylight always. I actually went up there with them one time, and the first time that I'd ever seen an A-7 up North I thought it was a MiG and I almost shot it down. [Laughing]

A-7. The guy with me, Bill Holverstott was my wingman, and he had better eyes than I did. I said, "MiG at 12!" Man, I was about to pop my tanks off and go for this guy, and he said, "Wait a minute, Beak! I think it's something else. It's an A-7." [Laughing] Some Air Force "Jolly Green" guy almost got nailed by a Marine F-4.

Q: Did you ever get a vector?

General Howell: I got one. We were actually down just flying our BarCAP and they made a strike I think northwest of Hanoi, and an Air Force [aircraft] who was low on fuel was trying to bug out and he had a MiG on his tail coming after him, and the guy couldn't turn because he was almost out of gas. He was calling for help, and so they vectored us toward him. We were on our way, armed up and ready to go, we had the Air Force F-4 on our radar and they were telling us that, "This guy's about seven miles behind and after him." Just about the time we got about 10 miles from him, we still didn't have this little bird on our radar, the guy turned around; and so, they vectored us off. I had one vector to a MiG and I thought I was going to go get one, or at least tangle with him.

Q: I guess your heart starts beating a little faster?

General Howell: Oh yes, you're excited as heck; my blood was up, you're fangs are out and I thought, "This is our turn. We're going to go get this guy, and go help that boy." The Air Force guy went right over us. We were down low, fast.

Q: But, you never saw the MiG?

General Howell: Never saw it.

Q: Who was your RIO in that, do you remember?

General Howell: We were "crewed-up" for those missions. I think that I got to go on 12 of those and I went with the same guy; H.E. Lee. Harry Lee.

Q: So, you flew with him most of the time?

General Howell: Just on Linebacker missions. We flew with everybody. I usually flew with a “nugget” on most of my air-to-ground missions. I always usually took up a new guy, or one of the younger guys, because we usually tried to fly the experienced RIO’s with the young pilots.

Q: Captain [Milton] Ganier was in that squadron, I knew him in [VMFA] 112,

General Howell: Yes, he was a good guy. Yes, Milt and I were, I think, we were in 101 together. Then we were in 115 together, too. Milt’s a good guy. Harry was my assistant maintenance officer. And then, he left though. You know, he had been in the squadron for quite a while. He was one of the guys that met me, as a matter of fact, he was one of the guys that went with me from 323 TAD down to Chu Lai that time. Harry Lee and I went and we ended up in different squadrons at Chu Lai, but we were always good friends. Then, we ended up in 115 together and he had split time. He had gotten out of the Marine Corps, gone to work for Bell Telephone in New York City, and had a great job. He was making money, but he said that civilians just drove him nuts. He went back in the Marine Corps and then ends up back in Vietnam. But, he’s a great individual and a super guy. He and I always went on the air-to-air missions together.

When he left, the guy that took his place was Joe Anderson. Joe Anderson was very young and people questioned me about making him-- I actually made him my maintenance control officer. But, the guy was just a solid leader. He just did a great job, and I was really proud of him. He came over there, you know he was a little bit behind me getting in. Bob Maddocks, and a bunch of the other guys that I’d taken through 101, ended up joining the squadron after I’d been in it for four or five months. Those guys came through like champs.

Q: 115 has this reputation of being one of these outfits that had an all-star cast of great future leaders of the Marine Corps.

General Howell: Well, it was in Vietnam forever. You know, 115 was over in WestPac almost during the entire Vietnam War, so it just literally had hundreds of guys in that squadron over those years.

Q: But, they weren’t all there together with you?

General Howell: No.

Q: Like I've heard that Denny Krupp was in the squadron with you.

General Howell: Yes, he and Maddocks and Anderson, and Mike Stortz, another superstar.

Q: Was Earl "The Pearl" Hailston in it when you were there?

General Howell: Yes, I think that...

Q: That's what I've heard but I couldn't find him in the book.

General Howell: He wasn't in the book?

Q: Bruce Poley was in it.

General Howell: Yeah, Bruce was there.

Q: I heard Barry Knutson was in it when you were in it.

General Howell: He came over.

Q: But, he wasn't in this book?

General Howell: No, a lot of those came over right at the very end. I don't know how much action-- you'll have to talk to them-- how much combat they saw. Now, Bob [Maddocks] saw quite a bit of combat. A lot of these guys joined the squadron after the war in Vietnam. As I recall we flew our last mission in January, and you know in Vietnam the war was over, and then we started flying in Cambodia. We were still flying in Cambodia when I left that spring. I think I left in either April or May to come home.

Q: May, you were in it from May '72 to May '73. But, yes, I've even heard that Peter Pace was in the infantry unit that was there.

General Howell: Yes, well Pete and I found that out. We were in Hawaii together at some kind of meeting and I had MarForPac then, and he was there visiting. We were at the bar talking about our

experiences and he said, “You know the only time that I was really around aviators was in a place called ‘the Rose Garden’.” And I said, “Are you kidding me? Because I was there.” We started comparing notes and we found out that we were there at the same time, and he was with that security company, or guard force, and I think he was the executive officer.

Q: Third Battalion, 9th Marines – that’s who it was.

General Howell: Yes, and so when I was there, early on, we had one of the Marines, in the security guard, who shot and tried to kill the company commander coming back from the relief tube. The guy’s coming through this jungle trail and here’s this Marine with a rifle and, “What are you doing Marine?” This guy had been the “Marine of the Month” the month before. So, he raises his weapon and the skipper does this [General Howell demonstrating some sort of defensive arm maneuver] and when the round goes off it went through his arm, but kept from going in his heart. The kid runs around, and the Officer of the Guard hears this, the Sergeant of the Guard has a .45 with the clip out of it [laughing]. So, he grabs his pistol and runs out there. And here’s this Marine running down the trail toward their hooches and there’s also some guys coming up from the hooches; just walking up. He sees them and he stops, and he turns around and here’s this sergeant with his empty .45 who says, “DROP THAT RIFLE OR I’M GOING TO BLOW YOUR HEAD OFF!” And the guy, you know [2 words inaudible] drops the rifle and gives up. Well, then he’s arrested. I’m assigned as the investigating officer for the Article 15. I was the Article 15 officer, and I’m the maintenance officer of 115 at that time, but I take this and I interview all the people. I interviewed the Marine.

Let me tell you about this guy. I have to set up an Article 15. I had a legal guy there, and I interview all the witnesses. Finally, I end up interviewing the young Marine and he’s very reticent, he doesn’t really want to talk. He’s a very quiet young man. It’s obvious, and it’s a fact of what he did; he admits it. He admits what he had done. His lawyer said, “You don’t want to say anything.” And he said, “Well, I know what I did, and I did it.” So, I asked him, “Why?” He won’t tell me why and says, “I don’t know.” So, we’re about to finish this up, and I’m about to recommend a court martial, and the lawyer says, “We’d like to go get a psych eval. We’d like to take him to the Philippines for a psych eval.” So, I said, “Ok.” We signed that and shipped him off. Then, we get a message about a month later that this guy is a psychopath, he’s just as crazy as a loon. It said, “You’ll never see him again.” You know, he’s gone into a padded cell and then gone home. He was plotting in his mind to kill: his priest, his mother, and everybody else. Any authoritarian person who he respected and admired, he was plotting to kill them. It was too bad because he was

really a sharp young guy, but he was just crazy; he was a psychopath. So, it was interesting.

Q: The timing was off--you usually had things happen right before you were scheduled to ship out.

General Howell: I just thought of that. That's right [laughing] and that was early on.

Q: You hear of missions like: Steel Tiger, Barrel Roll, was there anything different about those, or were those just your standard interdiction type?

General Howell: Those were the calls for missions outside of Vietnam, in different places.

Q: But, they were interdiction, like on the trail, the Ho Chi Minh Trail?

General Howell: Yes they were, and as a rule we would have them along the Trail in Laos and the border along through there, we would usually have Fast-FAC's flying jets. Up in Laos, there was another, I think those were the Steel Tiger missions that were up in northern Laos, and Plain de Jars, and what have you. We had CIA, Air America FAC's, and all these guys were mostly Air Force pilots who had volunteered, and they had taken off their uniforms and were flying for the Air America, flying O1's [Bird Dogs] and they would fly down to Nam Phong from time to time. They loved us, because the Marines, they said, "You know the Marines love to do work with FAC's, and they cooperate and do it like we ask." Then, he said, "Other people don't do that." So, they really loved us, I think that their call-sign was "Raven."

Q: Yes, "Raven-44." Your squadron got a letter for its support of Black Lion 4. His real name is Lou Hatch, and he was thanking the squadron for CAS around Pakse. The villagers in the area appreciated it so much that they gave you some village flags. Do you remember anything about that?

General Howell: They came, we had a Happy Hour together, these guys had solid gold bracelets on. You know, Laotians had a lot of gold, I mean these were just loaded with gold. And we had some guys who dealt with them but I stayed away from that kind of stuff. But, they were just good guys, they were hell-raisers and they were living on the edge. One of the guys got killed later on, that we heard about, one of the guys who had come down and seen us got shot down or crashed, and got killed.

Q: They were on their own then?

General Howell: They were, yes, it was a tough assignment.

Q: Do you recall anything about a battle at Saravane?

General Howell: Saravane was a crossroads in eastern Laos, right on the border near the A Shau. It was in the area along the trail and it was right where a lot of the different movements of stuff by the bad guys were. So, they had built a lot of fortifications in there. They had tunnels where they hid thousands of tons of equipment. We flew a lot of missions in Saravane and it was amazing, they'd say, "I want you to put it right on these trees." And you wouldn't see anything there, then you'd drop the bombs and you would get secondary explosions intense groups. I mean it would explode for an hour afterwards. A lot of times you tried and you didn't hit anything. But, I caught a lot of triple-A and we had [David] Echternach one of pilots, almost got shot out of the sky.

Q: "Nacho?"

General Howell: "Nacho," took a round through the leading edge of his F-4, and how the wing stayed on the airplane we still don't know. And he got it back.

Q: What kind of a round was it?

General Howell: It was 57 mm, I think, that got him. And it was on his second run, and they knew that they were having fire. Graham Kerr was his leader, and I thought that he should have gotten a court martial, I was so upset. They had made a run, "Nacho" had made a run and Graham forgot to arm, so he didn't get anything off. So, he's goes around for a second run, "Nacho," I don't think he had had more than five missions; I mean he was brand new. So, he comes around to make a second run behind his leader and that's when he got nailed. And he should never have been there for the second run, and his leader blew it! But, they made it back so they got a medal for it.

Q: What the DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross]?

General Howell: I don't know, something like that because they got the bird back. Well, "Nacho"

deserved a medal because “Nacho” got the bird back. We actually had to crate that bird home. That was the first time that I’d actually ever seen an F-4 taken apart, and crated, and put on a C-5. It was sort of sad. As a matter of fact, it had my name on it; that was number five. Number five had “Howell” on that thing, and it got shipped out.

Q: Now, you were recommended for a Bronze Star for a mission that you flew on the 2d of November, and this was with “Nacho” and flying Dash-2 evidently. Call-sign “Blade 2” it’s a DAS mission in the Plain de Jars, northern Laos. That was again with a “Raven” and it was a 122 mm gun position located in a cave. Do you remember that mission?

General Howell: Yes, I do remember that day. I don’t remember being put in for anything for it.

Q: You were put in for a Bronze Star.

General Howell: We got, I mean going in was just covered with red lead. I mean I thought, I’m in a cockpit breathing oxygen, but it took my breath away, it just, “haaaaaaa [gasping sound]!!!” and then, “waapoosh [explosion sound]!!!” and all this stuff. You’re still going down, it went by, and then there it is in my sight, and I dropped and then the FAC said, “We really got them. We nailed them.” And it’s really hard to get caves because these mountains, Plain de Jars, the Plain itself is at about 6,000 feet and the mountains go up beside it, and it’s got caves all in them. So, you’re way up at high altitude, the airplane doesn’t fly, it’s mushy as heck, but loaded with bombs. You’re rolling in at 15,000 to 18,000 feet, and then pulling out at 10,000 or what have you. So, it really wasn’t easy. A lot of winds up in those mountains, so it could be very frustrating, and there were a lot of times when I went up there and thought that I was getting something and didn’t hit squat; that day we did. That day we had a good day.

Q: It said 23 mm came at you from both sides on the run in, broken weather...

General Howell: Yes, but it was always broken weather [laughing]. The air war itself, up North it got very intense and they started coming in with some new SAM’s that were really mysterious and they were nailing people. I want to say that it was the SA-4, or something like that, that thing was just far superior to the SA-2 and SA-3, and it was maneuverable and all that. So, the Air Force was really having a lot of problems, and so was the Navy. So, they countered with a lot of their “Wild Weasels”, they intensified the Weasels going up there after them, they intensified that. They did a

good job and I mean really helped. At the same time, I'm not sure what happened, but they either didn't have many of those advanced SAM's or maybe the Russians cut them off, maybe they might have been warned, "You better not let them have anymore, or something like that." I don't know what came out of that because it was deadly. It was tough, and we didn't really have a counter for it. I'll never forget at our intelligence briefings, when these things first appeared, they'd tell us, "When you go up there, if you see one of those, try to get up to it and see what it is." And everybody said, "Are you kidding me?" It was a big joke amongst everybody.

Q: Of course, you didn't have anything like HARM [high speed anti-radiation missile].

General Howell: No, we had "Shoehorn." You know, we had detectors and we had the deceiver-receptors [phonetic] and we kept all of that up.

Q: ALQ-57, RHWR [radar homing and warning receiver]?

General Howell: Yes, they all worked, but for us the flares were really a great help. Most of the ZSU-23's were not radar guided, you know after they came in there, they would just have a bunch of them and concentrate on one area, and just hope that you flew through it. I think that's what happened to me on the Laotian thing. They were waiting for us and for some reason it didn't hit me and I tell you that there was enough there where I just thought, "Oh, I'm done. I'm screwed." And it just didn't get hit, didn't happen that day, and then happening to hit the target. As a matter of fact, I saw the source on one of those and I came back around, I had some bombs left so I came back around; I was out of my mind. He [the FAC or RIO??] said, "No more pass [spoken with strange French or Vietnamese accent]!" You know, here I'm saying that Graham Carr should have been court martialed, but I said, "I'm going to get that SOB who tried to get me [laughing], so I wouldn't bomb that other guy." It was just that it pissed me off so bad that that guy was trying to kill me.

Q: Well, I guess that we'd better cut it off for today, sir. Thank you.

General Howell: Yes, yes, okay.

END SESSION II

PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

SESSION III

10 May 2006

Dr. Allison: This is the third session of the oral history interview with Lieutenant General Jefferson Davis Howell by Dr. Fred Allison. Today's date is 10 May 2006, and again we are in his home, outside of Austin, Texas.

Sir, did you have any other comments on your experiences in Vietnam, before we move on and talk about the Naval Academy?

General Howell: Yes, I'd like to say a couple of things, one thing that you had asked that I only gave a limited answer, and is something that I think that I'd like to embellish on is the difference between what we experienced during my second time in Vietnam where we were flying out of Da Nang and then Nam Phong, compared to four years previous when I was flying out of Chu Lai and Da Nang with close air support.

One is, because of the intense enemy anti-aircraft and the reluctance of the fraggers--you know we are now under Air Force control and the way that they set up targets--we were very frustrated because we couldn't work very close to the friendlies [US or Allied troops]. In the Chu Lai days, it was very typical to be within two or three hundred meters of friendlies, so close that they could feel the heat of our napalm and the frag from our bombs. That's why we normally went with 250 pound bombs because of the blast and all that. Now [during second tour] while we are dropping ordnance, the closest we got to friendlies as a rule was 1,500 meters; that's a long ways away and of course, the FACs [forward air controllers] were struggling to avoid anti-aircraft fire too. So, a lot of times their marks weren't very close to where they wanted us to hit. We got a lot of, "from my mark hit: north 500 meters," you know a lot of that kind of stuff. That made it very difficult because when you are up at 15,000 feet trying to figure that out, and of course this is before GPS or any of that, so we didn't have any coordinates that we could dial into a weapons system; so it was a lot of "eyeball" and hit-and-miss. I think we still got pretty good at it and did a pretty good job, but it wasn't the same. So, a typical mission, particularly after we went to Nam Phong, because of the distances, where I had told you that back in the Chu Lai days I think the only time that I ever hit a tanker [aerial refueled] was when we went on a Night CAP [combat air patrol] thing, which was very rare. And then, maybe also when I had to TransPac [Trans-Pacific flight] an airplane over to Cubi Point [Philippines], we might have tanked on the way over there. But, now that we were coming out of Nam Phong--of course, we flew a lot of different missions, some

missions were up in the Plain de Jars and into Laos, and then supporting LINEBACKER which was unique and different.

The normal mission assignment for us was to launch sections of two aircraft from Nam Phong to fly a mission into I Corps area, back into I Corps area, and strike targets in that area, north of Da Nang and between Da Nang and Con Thien, that area. But, then we would land in Da Nang because we kept a turn-around crew there in Da Nang. So, we would land in Da Nang, normally. Then, refuel and “re-up” ordnance, go over to where the Air Force had an operations center on their side of Da Nang. Our little detachment was still on the old Marine Corps side there with some Marines that belonged to us, who stayed over there. They would refuel us and re-supply us and put ordnance on. Then, we would go over to the other side and get another operations briefing at the Air Force side which included an intel and weather brief, all that, and then come back and launch out of Da Nang, hit a target, and head back. So, that was very typical, very normal. Normally, coming out of Nam Phong we would always hit a tanker. We had Marine C-130s there, and so it didn’t matter whether it was night or day, wherever you went you’d usually fly towards Vietnam and over the Mekong River. There would be a tanker circling there and you would get behind, and you would top off your fuel and then head into Vietnam. This gave you good legs and also good target time, to work with a FAC and hit a target. When you were coming out of Da Nang you usually didn’t have a tanker, so you had to get on target real fast and head out. So, that was a typical mission. More of our guys flew that mission than anything.

Q: Still doing air support then, deep air support?

General Howell: Yes, it was to us. The Air Force called it, close air support. But, we disagreed. We found out that the Vietnamese were very afraid of us being too close to them, too. They didn’t trust us, they didn’t trust their own FACs either. And so, they were as much to do with it, too; as far as not having us not drop too close to them. Also, because of the triple-A [anti-aircraft artillery] and everything you had to drop a lot higher. So, we totally got away from dropping snake-eyes and napalm. We still used a lot of 3.5” rockets and then 500 pound bombs. The Air Force had a 750 pound bomb, and we started using a lot of those. I think they were designed for the B-52s, and so a lot of them found their way into Vietnam. We dropped a lot of 750 pound bomb, 1,000 pound and 2,000 pound bombs. So, that was the ordnance that we would carry. We’d usually be carrying two wing tanks and then bombs on the centerline, MERs [multiple ejection rack] on the centerline and TERs [triple ejector rack] on the wings; and that’s the way that we went. When you got into the monsoon season over Vietnam, we had to use a lot of TPQ-10 [USMC ground-controlled radar

bombing system], but a lot of formation flying off of Air Force F-111s. We'd get on the wing of an F-111, and with their system they would just give us a mark and we'd all drop, off of their system. They were pretty good.

Q: How did that work?

General Howell: They'd know what kind of ordnance we were using and they'd dial it into their computer, that way we would have sort of a pathfinder. We'd get on their wing and they'd give us a "mark and drop." In one incident, that came out of out of having the F-111s serve as Marine aviation pathfinders during the monsoon season, happened in our sister squadron; and it wasn't their fault. They were on an F-111's wing and he dialed in the wrong coordinates and they bombed Da Nang. It was awful. They hit the fuel dump and killed a couple of people, but blew that thing up. They had a fire going for a couple of days before they could put it out. And of course, we just gave them heck, those were VMFA-232's guys and we just gave them a hard time. You know, even though it wasn't their fault. It was the Air Force pathfinder that dialed in and, then gave them the wrong coordinates and...

Q: That must be where the name "230-Stupid" came from?

General Howell: Yes, [laughing] that and several other things. But, that was sort of the typical thing.

Q: That's interesting.

General Howell: A little human high jinx story from my time at Nam Phong, that I can't resist talking about when, I had told you that we initially started out in these Butler buildings and finally got Southeast Asia huts with tent tops built. They built them going down the hill. The runway was up on a hill and so everything went downhill from the runway on all sides actually, and it was in the jungle. It was more a wooded area, but it was still jungle terrain with a lot of teakwood trees. Initially the hooches that were built, going down the hill were the group headquarters cantonment and then they had the mess hall, and that kind of stuff. Then, you had the troop's hooches going down, and finally they started building "officers' country" which was the last one way down on the bottom of the hill; and in a mud hole. I mean it was muddy. So, we had to cope with that, and finally after--I don't know how long it was--you lose track of time, but it had to be at least a couple

of months. Finally, we had enough hooches built. H&MS-15 [Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron 15] had LtCol Neal Patrick and William “Rat” Cooper who was another great Marine fighter guy. When H&MS finally got all of their things built for their officers, they saved one of these Southeast Asia huts and they didn’t let anybody go in it. They said, “We’re going to make that the Officers’ Club.” So, they invited all the squadrons to all donate some money, and they sent a “six-by” [6 x 6 five-ton truck] up to Udorn. And they bought all the whiskey and beer that they could get with that money and they brought it back, and we had our first happy hour.

Q: I’ll bet that was [laughing] a good time.

General Howell: Yes, it was wonderful. It had been a couple of months, or so. And old Hank Ivy put on a great act, leading the [VMFA] 115 “Eagles” there. We all went with him, a whole bunch of us. It was muddy, rainy, and he parks outside of this thing, and there must have been eight or nine of us in his jeep, and on top of it and everything else. We all piled out and go in, and hoot and holler and had a great time. They got a craps game going in the corner and Col Ivy loved to roll dice. So, he spent a lot of time doing that, and we were singing songs and talking. It was VMFA-232 and VMFA-115, we had a few of the A-6 guys, but they flew at night. You know, we were still flying missions, so we didn’t get a lot of them, but we had some. Then, we had the “hamsters” [slang for H&MS] and some of the grunts that were supporting us. There were [C-] 130 guys.

Q: A good little mix there.

General Howell: And we finally ran out of booze, and it was probably good. It was good because we had had enough by around 10:30 or 11 o’clock that evening. So, Neal and Rat are trying to shoo us out there and get us out of that place, get us in [the jeep]. People are leaving. Well, Ivy’s in the corner and he doesn’t want to leave [laughing]. And they finally convinced him by turning off the lights and saying, “You’ve got to go.” So, Hank Ivy was a tough little guy.

Q: Yes, I met him in Reno and he kind of reminds me of “Pappy” Boyington, although I never met Pappy, just my mind’s eye view.

General Howell: Yes, and he had a little guy’s sort of a tough attitude, particularly after he had a few drinks under his belt. So, he’s not happy that they stopped this party. And so, he comes out just gritting his teeth and I can tell that the Skipper is not happy. We were laughing because we

just thought that it was funny. So, we all get on his jeep, and we've got guys all over this jeep. And the jeep was parked pointed at the hooches right away from it. Of course, these were these wooden floored with wooden sides, with a tent roof and screens so that it's sort of open. So, Ivy cranks these thing into reverse and "vrrrooommm, vrrrooommm, vrrrooommm" with all these guys on it, and backs off from the club hooch. Since he backed up we were thinking that he was going to turn around, but he stops about 15 feet away from that hooch, throws it into first gear and just yaannnn [phonetic, accelerated quickly], and with all of us sitting in this thing, he just rams this "club" hooch.

Q: Is that right [laughing]?

General Howell: He just nails it [laughing]. And pancakes it, knocks it off it's foundation. You know, these things were built on stumps [laughing]. And Patrick and Cooper were inside the hooch and it just knocked them right on their butts [laughing]. Ivy laughs and then pulls it back and heads back to officers' country, just laughing. We just think that it is funny. A couple of guys fell off of the jeep when we did it, but they get back on. And we go sloshing through the mud down across the road and over into where all the VMFA-115 hooches were, and he parks it. Then, we hit the rack. Well, it wasn't over yet, that was just a great ending, we thought, to the day. Well, we barely got in bed, and we had sort of the squadron command hooch, and I was the maintenance officer, so it was sort of the field grade hooch. I think Jay Bibler was the XO [Executive Officer], and the Skipper [Hank Ivy], and "Dutch" Dijon; he and Bibler sort of traded. I can't remember if they were both there at that time or one had left, or what have you; Dutch was there for awhile. But, anyways we were just getting in the rack and we hear this "rreeeeaaarrnn" [phonetic, jeep in mud], of course, it was real muddy and we hear this jeep, using all four-wheeled drive, going "rreeeeaaarrnn...rreeeeaaarrnn" [phonetic, jeep struggling in mud] and coming down with guys hollering. And we said, "Oh here comes Patrick." So, Cooper and Patrick, they know where our hooch is and they're going to ram our hooch. And we hear them scream [irately], "Ivy where are you?!! We're going to get you, you rotten son-of-a-gun!" And they come right up to our hooch, well I guess they didn't see it or didn't realize it, but we still had the tent tops and we had tent poles that would hold the tent tops out away from the building. But, the poles were sort of attached to the side of the "hooch" and then they held the tent flaps out, so you could have air coming through there. Well, right where they came in it had sort of slouched a little bit, and the tent pole was just about one foot or two off the ground, holding the tent there. And they came in there and impaled that jeep on that tent pole [laughing]. I mean that they just

“rreeeeaarrrnn...rreeeeaarrrnn...crunch...clank...clank...clank” [phonetic] [laughing]. Yeah, and they put a hole in the radiator.

Q: [Laughing].

General Howell: We just sort of felt a “vrrrroommmppp” [phonetic, slight jolt] inside the hooch. It was just so funny, we just laughed. That’s one of those great moments in sports. Ivy just thought that that was great.

Q: Did that become a regular occurrence then?

General Howell: It became a regular occurrence.

Q: You kept the booze coming in?

General Howell: Yes, and Ivy raised havoc with that jeep on those occasions, wherever we went. And it was a common occurrence for the airframes-“tin-benders” [slang for Marines who worked in the “metal shop” or aircraft airframes] to have to repair the jeep the day after we had a happy-hour. That was a regular ritual; they’d be cussing the skipper because he’d beat up the jeep. That was a wonderful thing. That was fun.

Q: Do you remember when the VMFA-232 Phantom was shot down by the MiG?

General Howell: I remember the occasions and I’m trying to remember, you know they had gotten into the game of the LINEBACKERS, and that was on one of those missions. They were up and got up, they got a warning that this MiG was in the area. And I know that Jake Albright, I think was the section leader on that thing, and I’m trying to remember the fellow’s name, I think it was Frank Cordova, that got shot down. But he was a wingman, and some how they got a vector toward them, didn’t have their tanks off, were very slow airspeed, and this guy [a MiG-21] just ate them up. He came in behind and he nailed the wingman and zipped on out of there. I don’t even know if they saw him, or when they saw him, he was gone. Both crew members ejected successfully and the RIO got picked up, but the pilot didn’t--I think that’s the way it went. The RIO got picked up and they never saw the pilot again. I don’t believe he lived. I don’t think he came out of the country when [they released all the POWs], but maybe I’m wrong on that. But, it

was really a sad thing. That crew had actually ejected out of an F-4 about a month prior to that when they were working up to go on these missions, they went out and did a lot of ACM and stuff, practice. They had some how gotten through their bingo [fuel state that requires a return to base] and didn't get back in time, and they had a flame-out [an engine shutdown] and had to eject out of the airplane; that same crew.

Q: Kind of a hard luck crew.

General Howell: Yes, they're in Thailand, and then here they are up there on this mission, and they got nailed. So, it was really bad. That might have been one reason they all of the sudden said, "115, we're going to let you into this thing." I think that's how we were able to get into it, because of that occurrence; it was one of the reasons why. It was interesting, the two squadrons were both fine squadrons, but 115 because of the [F-4] "B" was just loaded with seasoned pilots; particularly that first group. Most of us had been in Vietnam before and were pretty wary, or seasoned would be the way to put it. VMFA-232, they had a lot of "nuggets." They did have some seasoned guys, but they just did not have the depth that we did; and they suffered for it.

Q: I talked to one guy who was in 232, Dave Underwood? Was he in there? "Deputy Dog?"

General Howell: Yes, and Carson Culler, he was their maintenance officer. You know, he ended up--he was a great guy. He was their maintenance officer and really a fine fellow, but he ended up going back home, flying out of Hawaii a year or so later, and got killed ejecting on a takeoff.

General Howell: He had a problem on takeoff with his seat. Something was mis-rigged and so both he and the backseater got killed in that thing.

Q: He didn't even get out of it, or something you said.

General Howell: Yes, it was just going right off the end of the runway there at K-bay [Kaneohe, Hawaii]. So, that was sad, but we really--I know 115 didn't lose a bird while I was there. We had some real close scrapes. We had Joe Anderson, who was tanking and had the whole hose, the entire hose, come off of the C-130 and wrap around his airplane.

Q: And he flew it back?

General Howell: Yes, he got it back. He almost lost it on final [approach]. We were watching him come in, he fought that thing all the way in, and it just beat the heck out of his airplane. The airplane was un-flyable for long time after that because it just beat up the tail and the stabilators and everything. We had to replace all of that. He did a remarkable job getting that bird back on that runway. That was something to see. J.T. Anderson, he's now a retired two-star [major General]. And now he's the head of the Smithsonian Museum at Dulles there. He works for General Dailey. He's a great American, a great guy.

Q: I believe he went in to Harriers later didn't he?

General Howell: Yes. He went to Harriers. I never forgave him for that, but he went Harriers. When he came back from Nam Phong, he had the choice to either keep flying, go Harriers, or go get a staff job. And so, he chose to go Harriers [laughing]. He became one of the top Harrier pilots. He had commands going all the way up, he made General, so he's very successful.

Q: You talked about drug problems in the military yesterday during this period. Were there any racial problems?

General Howell: There was none, in our outfit, none of that happened. It was brewing around; I know that the guard company had problems. And I think that Pete Pace had told me that they really had to wrestle with that, and that that was a big problem. They had a lot of time on their hands.

Q: Did your squadron do anything to obviate that type of problem?

General Howell: We worked so hard, and our guys depended so much on each other, that we just didn't have time for that foolishness. I think that was another kudo for Hank Ivy's leadership; that that kind of nonsense never really manifested itself to any serious degree. So, that wasn't a problem in 115. And I just don't remember in the air wing that really being a problem. But, we were aware of it.

One thing that did happen, that just galled us all and there was a good reason for it, but it really bothered us, was when the Marine Corps went through all of that sensitivity training. Where we were all required, no matter what, and we actually had to shut down combat operations and flying, to make all of our Marines to sit down, and hold hands and we called each other by our first

names...

Q: They had you do that?

General Howell: Yes, well you know it's the "instructor method....." it was part of the "things we went through, and how do you feel about this, and how do you feel about that? And let's call each other by our first names while we're here in the tent, and that kind of stuff."

Q: Enlisted men calling officers by their first names?

General Howell: Yes. Yes. And the Marines were very uncomfortable and so was "the Beak," particularly with my grunt background it just really bothered me. And what really hurt me was that we were in combat! We had an enemy that was trying to push the Vietnamese Marines and Vietnamese Army out of I Corps, and yet we had to shut down and do that silly nonsense. We protested like heck, but we were in no...

Q: Col Ivy did?

General Howell: Oh, yes, but there was no slack. We had to do it and within a certain period of time. So, that was just another one of these, it was sort of a "Catch-22." I'm sure that you've read that book, you know and some of the silly things that come out from higher headquarters. I'm sure that our own Marine Corps is under great pressure to do that because that was during the "race stuff" and all.

Q: That was sort of the bottoming out of the Marine Corps. You know a lot of historians and writers say that people, the officers that had this Vietnam War experience then stayed in the service and sort of worked to make sure that that did not happen again. Do you see that in your own career, sir?

General Howell: Well, I never had any intent of getting out, as long as they let me fly jets.

Q: You never thought about getting out after that?

General Howell: No. About the only serious time that I thought about leaving the Marine Corps

was after my first Vietnam time, when I was an instructor at Kingsville. That was during a great boom area in the United States, and in Texas, and I had a lot of college buddies who were making a lot of money in Houston and Dallas. They were offering me, "Hey, come here and I'll help you get a good job." and all that. I thought about it. It's funny, I was lucky because once more my mother was visiting us down in Kingsville, and I sort of unloaded on her. Janel has always been:

"Whatever you want to do we'll make it work." But, she's always been that way and never any argument. She always said, "Whatever makes you happy, do it." But my mother sort of turned me, I told her, "I think that I'm sort of wasting my time. I'm here flying this little F-9 and my buddies are out doing that. I just don't know if I ought to stay in the Marine Corps." And it's funny, she looked me right in the eye and my mother has always been real sweet to me, and I was her baby boy, but she said, "Jeff Howell, you know for a peasant you're not doing too bad as a captain in the Marine Corps. Think about it." And, that made me think about it [laughing].

So, I stayed and I loved it. She knew that I loved flying airplanes anyways. But, I never ever would have thought that I'd really ever want to get out after that. I didn't want to get out when I had to retire, but there comes a time for everybody.

Q: Coming out of Vietnam, did you have some things you personally wanted to change, some things that you believed needed fixing?

General Howell: I think the whole fighter community was very upset that we had allowed our fighters to become just bombers, and Nam Phong proved-- my first experience with getting those birds back from Chu Lai, when I had the maintenance there at 101, they were just in awful shape, and that was a terrible thing, trying to get them back up. Then, we found out, at Nam Phong we got those birds up and going, and so a lot of us pledged that we were never going to allow our airplanes not to be full mission capable. We would do whatever it would take. If we were really going to be a viable fighter community, we'd better have good machines and good weapons systems. Also, the tactics; we realized how weak we were on our tactics. We went out and did some practice one-on-one tactics, very poorly prepared; MAWTUPac [Marine Air Weapons Training Unit Pacific] and MAWTULant were trying to train people on how to do that stuff. But, I think that really led the Marine Corps to MAWTS [Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron] and to participating in Top Gun and taking that real seriously. And so, all the guys that were a part of that realized that we needed to participate in, and make whatever sacrifice that it took with men and machines, resources, to ensure that our aircrews were properly trained for combat. And so, I think that was a great lesson for us all. I think a lot of us really pushed hard for that, and I think that is one reason

that MAWTS has been so successful, because they had great support from the upcoming leadership in the Marine Corps; how important it was. A lot of people really bitched about it.

Q: Did they? That's something that I wanted to talk about.

General Howell: Well, it's an incredible drain on your squadrons; to furnish the men, machines, and all that, and the time to do that. But, I never [complained], I said, "Whatever it takes. We'll do it and we'll have as many people there as we can get."

Q: And Top Gun too?

General Howell: Yes, and of course when I had the MAG [Marine Air Group], I tried my best to get as many of my fighter guys, and my different squadrons, over there from Hawaii.

Q: Well, anything else on Vietnam? You ready to move on?

General Howell: I'll talk forever, no that's good. I think that's about it. I just wanted to make sure that you had that difference between the way the game was, it was low and if you had eight bombs, you'd make eight passes, at least. And a 200 foot napalm drop was not unusual [in first tour].

Q: Is that right, 200 feet in front of the troops?

General Howell: Yes, 200 feet off the ground, too. I mean it was not unusual to have a 1,500 or 2,000 foot pattern with a 20 degree, or less, run and then you'd almost be on the ground when you'd drop. I mean, because you could put it right where you wanted it that low. It was just a matter of laying it right on the ground. You had to make sure that the armament, the arming delay, was not too long because the darn things wouldn't go off, particularly snake-eyes. Napalm could tumble, and then finally arm itself, and blow. But, you had to make sure that your snake-eyes had a very short arming time because if you're dropping them that low they hit the ground real quick. So, we learned all of that kind of stuff. Okay, that's enough.

Q: But, that made me think of another question when you were talking about all that time period, you said that, "You would fly one mission a day, and then every other day, you'd fly a mission and a night mission."

General Howell: Yes.

Q: This is when you were in VMFA-542 doing real close air support with the Marines up in I Corps, but if you're flying that close weren't the missions real short?

General Howell: Yes.

Q: Wouldn't you have time to come back and do another mission if you wanted to?

General Howell: Well, yes, if you were on a hot pad.

Q: You could do multiple missions?

General Howell: The minute you landed you had another bird waiting for you. The hot pad would be established for about a six hour period. And so, you would launch on a hot pad on a scramble, hit a target that was only 15 minutes away, and you could get back in 35 or 40 minutes, and if you had another scramble, you could just walk to your next airplane and go. The RIO would usually get the brief on the phone while you were starting the motors, while you were starting the airplane, then he'd run out there and jump in, and brief you while you were taxiing out, on where you were going and what you were going to do.

Q: So, that was immediate CAS, or on call?

General Howell: Yes.

Q: So, you could respond real quickly on that.

General Howell: Yes.

Q: And you would do that for six hours?

General Howell: Yes. You'd be hot pad and you loved it. You know, it was great. However, sometimes you'd be on that thing and nothing would ever happen, you'd get to sleep for a long

time, but you'd miss out on flying. And so, of course the maintenance officer liked that because they used those birds in the afternoon a lot. You had a bunch of "up" airplanes. There were all kinds of things, I'm sure that I've forgotten a lot of this stuff. But, there's just a lot cooking.

Q: We could spend all week talking about that probably, but that's good. Well, so you came home and you went back to, let's see the family was in Austin.

General Howell: They were right here, in Austin. They came to Austin.

Q: Then, you've got to go up to Annapolis.

General Howell: I packed up the family and moved up to Annapolis. I found out in Nam Phong because I got a message that said, "Your next duty station will be at the Naval Academy as an instructor." And so, all of the sudden it hit me between the headlights that that was my payback tour for that Econ degree and...

Q: Because you were going to teach Economics there, right?

General Howell: Yes, and so I had always thought that you couldn't be stationed there unless you were a graduate of the Naval Academy. That shows you how much I knew. I get up there and I find out that there were 40 Marine Corps officers stationed at the Naval Academy. At least 20, I was astounded, about 20 of us worked for the Dean of Academics and the other 20 worked for the Commandant of Midshipman. They were in charge of their "good order and discipline." Those were the company and battalion officers, and all that kind of stuff. We were basically teachers-professors. We didn't have anything to do with their discipline, and all that kind of stuff.

Another thing I discovered there was that our purpose was to recruit midshipman to come into the Marine Corps. At that time, they've had this ratio of midshipman who are allowed to go Marine Corps, it varies, at that time it was 16 2/3 percent of any class was allowed to go Marine Corps. For the last several years prior they hadn't made it because of Vietnam. They were so many Marines that got killed, a lot more than sailors. So, General [Robert] Cushman was very concerned about that, and so were, I think, a lot of the seniority in the Marine Corps, because there was still a very significant element in the senior officers of the Marine Corps who were Naval Academy graduates. They didn't like this idea that we were not getting our quota. Of course for me, I was there because of my payback. It wasn't me. But, they sent a slug of truly fine fast-

moving officers there to be there. Even before I got there they had this concern. General [Charles C.] Krulak was there and left the summer I got there. He was there, and [James A.] Brabham and a lot of other guys. Janel and I had fun counting up, that while I was there that three years there were at least a dozen of the Marine officers, who were there that, later became General officers in the Marine Corps.

Q: Is that right?

General Howell: So, we had Mark Moore--one thing, the senior Marine at the Naval Academy historically had always been a lieutenant colonel, and he purposely sent a Col Mark Moore, to take over that operation. Mark Moore got all the Marines together [laughing] and said, "You will still do your duties for at least eight to ten hours a day and then for the other eight to ten hours a day you are going to recruit people." And we set up a battle staff, a Marine Corps battle staff and setup an aggressive program of recruiting midshipmen. There was no activity that went on, on those grounds, that did not have a Marine standing there in full uniform watching and talking and encouraging the midshipman. We set up aggressive programs to teach them about the Marine Corps and Marine aviation, and all that. I helped put on shows. I love doing that kind of stuff. We had a great briefing with music and movies, and all that kind of stuff [excitement in voice]. [We showed movies with] airplanes fighting each other. And so, that was the fun part of it. [We] brought in guest lecturers to talk about the Marine Corps, but the main thing was just the presence, being there with them all the time. We found out that it didn't take long, that a lot of the midshipman who were interested in being Marines started coming around, and they're also escaping Bancroft Hall. If they could find an excuse to go see a prof or an instructor, that got them away from all the BS they put up with, particularly the underclassmen. So, I started having this group. I got there in 1973 and I started teaching "youngsters," who are sophomores. That sort of became my group of young men who sort of became my little brothers, a lot of them ended up going Marine Corps. To this day they are very good friends and we stay in touch.

They were the class of '76. Even though I had the class of '77 and '78, I taught them too, that group seemed to be the group that I sort of globbed on to.

Q: What was your teaching routine?

General Howell: I was teaching three classes my first year there, we were in the Department of U.S. and International Studies, which had economics, foreign languages, and political science I

guess was in that. And so, he [the department head] asked me, Captain “Dee” Butler [USN] asked me to come up and be his executive assistant that next year because he was an old Navy fighter pilot and he liked to be around fighter pilots. So, I told him, “I want to keep teaching.” He said, “There is no way you can do that and be my assistant.” And I said, “How about if I teach just one class?” And he said, “Okay.” So, instead of three classes a semester, I taught just one class. So, I had less exposure I guess in the classroom. But, I really enjoyed working for Captain Butler, and was still involved. He was a real gadabout and he was involved. He was an Academy grad and he loved that school, and was involved in everything. He dragged me along with him. He loved me and we got along great. And so, I spent my second two years there mostly as an executive assistant, involved in all kinds of stuff. I was also involved with –and I think Captain Butler had something to do with it--I became the executive secretary for the Superintendent of the Naval Academy’s Academic Advisory Board. About every semester, about every six months this group of high-rollers, you know they’d be newspaper editors and presidents of universities, and what-have-you, would come in and meet with the Superintendent, and he would brief them on what was going on, and they would advise him. I was basically the guy, I was the gopher, to get their reservations, plane tickets, make sure that they got to the airport and back, and then I would take notes at the meetings. I kept the record. The Superintendents were very kind to me. So, that was very interesting. I did that for the three years that I was there. So, I enjoyed that.

I was also--every athletic team at the Naval Academy has a military officer as a sponsor. They called it an “officer representative, officer rep.” So, when they traveled the coaches didn’t have to worry about anything, you would take care of the money part of it, like feeding them and all that kind of stuff. I became the officer rep on the Plebe basketball team, and so that was a lot of fun too. I spent a lot of time--I went to every practice and Plebes aren’t allowed to travel a lot, but we played games there and had games. Of course, I spent a lot of time with the varsity too. So, that was a good experience. So, we were just chock-a-block loaded with activities. It was seven days a week in uniform going to things and doing things. It wasn’t awful in that it wasn’t like being out in the fleet where you are working 16 hours a day. I had a lot of time to be home and coaching little league.

Q: Getting the family time?

General Howell: Oh yes, doing all that, spending time with the kids and wife. I enjoyed the heck out of that. So, that was the first time since Janel and I had been married that she had been anywhere three years. That was the first time in my Marine Corps career I was stationed anywhere

for three years. So, that was quite extraordinary.

Q: It seemed like forever I bet?

General Howell: Yes, it did.

Q: Did you still get to fly?

General Howell: Yes, but we were still flying proficiency. And so, I would go down to Andrews [Air Force Base] and meet--I'd usually--I had a good friend, John Ditto, who was stationed at Headquarters Marine Corps [HQMC] and we'd call and arrange a time. We would meet at Andrews and get in a T-33 and go on an "out and in." Usually at night, that way you'd get night time, instrument time, and get your flight time. We'd just try to go to every Air Force base within range of Andrews, of a T-33, throughout that period. I think it was that was when we had the oil crisis wasn't it?

Q: Yes, '73 and on in there.

General Howell: I think they cut off--I think it was maybe my last year there that President Carter...

Q: Well, Carter was elected in '76, about when you were leaving.

General Howell: Okay. So, it was later on. I guess I flew proficiency, I guess this is when I went to Headquarters, the next time, we didn't have proficiency flying. They cut out proficiency flying sometime in the 70's, so as a "staff puke" you didn't get to do that anymore.

Q: But, you kept getting flight pay didn't you?

General Howell: Yes, you had to meet the "gates" or whatever they call it.

Q: How successful were the initiatives of Colonel Moore?

General Howell: Outstanding!

Q: You did start making the quota then?

General Howell: Our first year I think we had 15 and $\frac{3}{4}$, the next year we were right at 16 and $\frac{3}{4}$ [percent]. We got our quota up the next two years. So, Mark Moore, he made brigadier General out of that place.

Q: Did he?

General Howell: As a matter of fact, I think he was only there two years and then he picked up BG and left, then we had somebody else. But, he did a wonderful job. He is a wonderful man and I think he's teaching, to this day, out at Cal-Irvine or San Diego State, someplace like that. He's actually still teaching. He was the head of the History Department there at the Naval Academy. He's really an outstanding man. He was quite an interesting fellow. I loved him. I thought he was just a great guy.

Q: At this time was difficult to get a spot to fly with the Navy and did it help recruiting that the Marine Corps was offering aviation contracts?

General Howell: Yes, it was. That's a very good point. I'd say a big slug of the guys we got were guys who wanted to fly jets. In the Navy, they were having a hard time. A lot of Navy guys were going props [propellers], going multi-engine.

Q: They already knew in the Naval Academy that that's where they were headed.

General Howell: Yes, they knew. Those guys knew everything. They had it charted out, I tell you. I can't tell you how many Navy Midshipman would come to me and say, 'Major Howell, I know in my Navy career, if I go Navy, I'll do this my third year and make this, and then do that in my fifth year, or eighth year, and ninth year I'll be here and do that and be a division leader, and I'd set.... Now, in the Marine Corps what will I do? How will that match up in the Marine Corps?' I'd just laugh at them. I'd say, "Listen buddy, there are forty Marine officers here. Now, you go to each of the forty of them and let them tell you about their career and you know what? You're going to get forty different answers because as Marines we go and do everything. You don't know what you're going to do in the Marine Corps."

Q: That's right. You go where you are needed.

General Howell: Yes, and so, I said, "There are no guarantees. But, anybody who is interested in Marine aviation, let me tell you this, "You can get jets a lot easier in the Marine Corps than you can in the Navy." And that was a fact; I didn't have to lie at all. I didn't have to exaggerate.

Q: And get a contract.

General Howell: You'd be given a guarantee, that's a good point. They really didn't get a guarantee that they could get aviation, and we could give them a guarantee. When we'd get them you'd say, "If you make the qualifications, then you can be a jet pilot!" So, we got a lot of guys that way.

Q: Who do you recall that you knew later in your career that you recruited this way?

General Howell: A guy named Tom Callella.

Q: Dan Driscoll at the Academy at this time?

General Howell: Dan Driscoll was a senior my first year there. So, he graduated. I got to watch him play football there though, and he was a great football player. The guy was really good. He was also a three or four-striper, like a regimental commander in the Brigade of Midshipman. So, he was a great leader there at the Naval Academy, very highly respected. So, we met each other, Dan and I met each other, but I was teaching "youngsters" and he was an upper-classmen. So, I just got to know him slightly.

Q: What about Dennis Dilucente, was he there at that time?

General Howell: Yes, he was a '76er [phonetic]. He was one of the guys I knew. Yes, and he was a...

Q: Was he one of your "little brothers" as you call them?

General Howell: I wasn't that close to him, but I knew him and I knew him well. But, he didn't come around to me that much. But, I'm not sure who tricked him into being a Marine. But, I knew Dennis well and he was one of our guys that we knew, that we thought, we were going to be able to get.

Q: What about Dave Sanders? Do you know a guy named Dave Sanders? He didn't go into the Marine Corps I just know him.

General Howell: That's a familiar name. I probably knew him.

Q: He was a gymnast, or something, gymnastics.

General Howell: Okay, just vaguely. There's a guy named Kent Bows or Bowling who ended up being the skipper of [VMFA]-212. He was a '76er that I recruited. The guy got out of the Marine Corps after he had that command. He left the Marines and it broke my heart because I thought he would have been a General officer. Yes, he was one of those guys. A helicopter guy, I can see him, but I can't think of his name, very successful. He was a MAWTS [Marine Advanced Weapons and Tactics Squadron] instructor and I think he might have made BG. Really, I'll just have to think of his name. I can't remember his name. But, we had some good people. They were good guys.

Q: Women were starting to get ready to come into the Naval Academy. In fact...

General Howell: The summer I left was the summer they came in.

Q: Any agitation or comments on that?

General Howell: Those midshipman were so upset.

Q: Were they? The midshipman or the staff, or both?

General Howell: Everybody.

Q: Everybody.

General Howell: Everybody. Just tight-jawed. They just didn't want that. The midshipman, more than anybody, were just truly upset about that. And it has worked out, but I mean you talk about a radical change in a culture. And I was glad to be leaving when that occurred.

Q: Of course, you face that issue all through your career though later on I'm sure....

General Howell: Yes, well the thing about it, you know in [VMFA] 212, our first deployment [1978-1980] over there we didn't--both of them--we didn't have any women in the squadron.

Q: I don't remember any.

General Howell: And then, they started coming in. Then, by the time I had MAG-24 we had women in all of our squadrons. So, it's funny how that all changed.

Q: Do you have anything else on the Naval Academy?

General Howell: I missed being out in the fleet flying jets, that's what I always wanted to do, but that's probably one of the best things that happened to me because: one, I was really very physically ill, I got mono [mononucleosis] over in Nam Phong and it effected me more than just mono. I had my stomach that just went--I was so upset with being sick and still trying to operate and fly that I made myself even sicker. It took me probably at least a year to recuperate from that, at the Naval Academy. Just being there in a stable situation, being with the family gave me a chance to recharge my batteries.

Q: From there you went to Command and Staff, what were your thoughts on that?

General Howell: Another "sea story" to tell you about the wisdom of Mark Moore versus the wisdom of Jeff Howell. I had buddies out in the fleet, you know I'd been out for three years now, and I wanted to get back. But, my monitor kept saying, 'hey, you need to go to Command and Staff College.' I said, "Boloney! I want to go back to the fleet." And I told that to Col Moore and he grabbed me and he said, 'Howell, you're stupid. Don't you realize that you could go out to the fleet one year and they're going to pull you back and send you to Command and Staff.' He said, 'go to Command and Staff now. Get it under your belt, so when you go back out to the fleet you'll

get at least three years.’ And that was really good advice. So, that’s why I went from there to Quantico to Command and Staff College. Mark Moore was just wonderful. It’s those kind of mentors, and I really would have done some dumb things if it wasn’t for people saying, ‘wait a minute Howell. Think about it.’ So, I was very fortunate to have people helping me make the right decisions.

Q: Did you move the family down there?

General Howell: Oh, yes. We all moved down. We were in Quantico. We were up in those duplexes right up behind the new PX there. I think it’s all torn down now, or I don’t know if it’s still there. We lived there and got to live right across the street from the guy that talked me into going into the Marine Corps, Tom Campbell. [He] had gone full circle and he was an instructor at Command and Staff at that time. So, he was one of my instructors. So we got to get back together. That was a wonderful experience.

Q: That’s a year tour, that’s a year school? What were your impressions of the school?

General Howell: One full year. We got there in July and left the next June. It was a good year. It was like just about any other kind of military instruction. It had about one-third of the stuff that was just great. One third was okay, and another third was a waste of time. But, I found that in every school I’ve ever gone to.

Q: What was the great part about it?

General Howell: Well, we had some electives that were very strategically oriented, talking about what the world was going to do, what the Marine Corps place would be, what we should be thinking about in the future. That was really good. It got people thinking, here we are, mostly majors and a few lieutenant colonels, but got us thinking bigger picture and thinking about where the Marine Corps is going. “How do we fit? What should we do to contribute to that?” So, that was good. That got us thinking about that. I really believe that the staff, the staff instruction, teaching you how to be a good staff officer; that manual on ‘Completed Staff Work’ and all, it was a pain. But, it was something that you needed to know if you’re going to go up and be on a high level staff. So, that was good instruction. That was excellent. The friendships you make, really made a lot of great friends with the infantry, artillery, helicopter guys that I never had known.

Those friendships lasted throughout my whole career. [Clyde L.] “Jake” Vermilyea, we had never met each other. We met at Command and Staff. We weren’t even in the same seminar, but just sort of took a liking to each other and we developed a friendship that carried us all the way through our careers. It’s those kinds of friendships...

Q: Was he a helicopter pilot?

General Howell: He was a [C-] 130 pilot. But, he also flew helicopters, too. I think he swapped between the two of them. Jake Vermilyea is a great American. He made two-stars and had Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. I’m not sure --Marine Bases East, or whatever that is. I’m not sure what other commands he had but he ended up in United Space Alliance down in Houston, and we got to renew our friendship when I went down there to work for SAIC [Science Applications International Corporation].

Q: Anyone else that you recall in your class, or instructors?

General Howell: Well, there are some characters. You know, we had “Deech” Kylie, was in that class, D.J. Kylie. I don’t know if you remember him.

Q: Yes, I do. I do. He was running the MCAA [Marine Corps Aviation Association] for awhile, wasn’t he?

General Howell: Well, he wasn’t running the MCAA.

Q: He was doing something with it.

General Howell: He was an officer at the MCAA. He wrote an article for the *Yellow Sheet*. He’s now down at the museum in Pensacola. He’s active in that. Deech thought that he was the world’s greatest fighter pilot, and he was really a character. But, the guy was a very gifted writer. To this day, he really knows how to write an article or a book. DJ Kylie is an interesting fellow. You know we had some good guys and some average guys, and had a good time.

Q: This was ’76?

General Howell: '76 – '77. After the election, I guess that's when President Carter got elected.

Q: Oh, okay. Was any new doctrine talked about, this on the eve of maneuver warfare and General [Al] Gray bringing that whole thing in.

General Howell: General Gray, he had had a Marine amphibious brigade, I think, and it may have been in the Mediterranean, and he came in and lectured us. He came in and talked to us. That was the first time that I ever saw him. He really made an impact on everybody. Because he...

Q: Talking about maneuver warfare?

General Howell: Yes, and more of what the Marines ought to be doing and all that kind of stuff. There was a lot of that going on, but a lot of it was, a lot of the instruction was entrenched stuff. Still did the old division in the attack problem and that was a big deal. It was an examination where they gave you a map and overlays and you had to plan an attack, and go through the whole rigmarole, then, you got graded on it. I aced that thing. Some of my grunt buddies, it really pissed them off.

Q: [Laughing].

General Howell: You know, 'Fighter guy aced it.' But, there's some good stuff in there.

Q: Were you happy with the way that they were treating aviation there, as far as, playing a role with the...

General Howell: No, the aviation instruction sucked. It was terrible. They had a couple of passed over, you know, majors on their instruction staff talking about Marine aviation. And it really pissed us all off. And so, we actually went to the head of Command and Staff College, commander or whatever you call it, the colonel, and said, "This is unsatisfactory. We would like, on an afternoon, to put on a presentation on Marine aviation. You can't require it, but it would be on one of these 'rec days' [recreational days] or 'rec afternoons.' But, we will talk our guys into going," because we offered them a keg of beer and refreshments afterwards if they would come to this thing. So, we got most of the class to come and we put on our own show, just like we had done at the Naval Academy. And Kylie was in the middle of that, too. He was really hilarious. We got all

the aviators in the class, we all pitched in ten bucks a piece, and they got it all in one dollar bills. So, at the beginning of the class, you know when the guy gets up on the stage he said, "This is Marine aviation [extremely dull voice]." Then, right at that time, Kylie in full--you know he's got on his G-suit, torso harness, helmet, visor down, and he's got a big old bushel basket full of money. And he walks out he's throwing this damn money at everybody, and the speaker said, "We just wanted you guys to have today's flight pay. This is just today's flight pay that we're getting and we just wanted to share it with you."

Q: [Laughing].

General Howell: And they threw it. Because that was just--those guys bitched!

Q: About flight pay?

General Howell: Flight pay! Flight pay! And I tell you, their wives were more upset about it than the guys. But, you could tell that that really galled those guys, that aviators got flight pay. It really got in their knickers. We just stuck it to them. We stuck it to them, and that was fun. But, we put on a great show and had a good party afterwards. But, that was unsatisfactory and I hope they improved that. That was part of that "one-third" crap kind of thing.

Q: Was there a lingering sort of discrimination against Marine aviation?

General Howell: I don't know.

Q: I mean you picked it up there, that maybe it was flight pay or whatever. But, did you pick it up anywhere else up until this point in the Marine Corps?

General Howell: Well, I think that there are certain billets where it's sort of taboo for aviators, at least it was back then, and little by little that's sort of gone away. Really the only, I guess, sacred place left is the Commandant really, and that doesn't bother me a whole lot personally. Now people are saying that our Secretary of Defense might choose an aviator just out of spite, but when the present Commandant goes, I don't know, the very idea that the primary purpose of the Marine Corps is to support the Marine on the ground. I think it's good to have a Commandant who is a ground kind of guy. So, that doesn't bother me. I think that that's a good focus, me personally.

Sometimes, I get upset when you don't have an aviator ACMC, and that happens from time to time. That's sort of, to me personally, I would be sensitive. I was more sensitive to that than I imagine when it occurred.

Q: Are you referring to General [Walter] Boomer, when....

General Howell: Yes. Yes. And he's a good friend. We were at the Naval Academy together. Walt, you know he did a great job in Desert Storm. But, I just think that you need a balance and Marine aviation, I'm getting ahead of myself here, but when I became a force commander and we were written into the battle plans for the Central Command and for the Korean Command, they wanted the Marines in their battle plan. And the main reason was they wanted Marine tactical aviation. The Marines had such a strong tactical aviation force in those MEFs that they were more than happy to get us into their battle plan very quickly. If we hadn't had Marine aviation they didn't want, they could care less, the Army has been the strong force in the Central Command and Korean Command, and then didn't care beans about Marine ground coming in there, but we forced them, we said, "We come in as a MAGTF [Marine Air-Ground Task Force] so if you bring TacAir you bring everybody." And so, that's how the MEFs got written into the battle plan.

Q: Wow.

General Howell: So, and that's my opinion, of course. I could be wrong, but I'm convinced of that. I saw that.

Q: You were at the place to make a good call on that.

General Howell: Well, you see, I think that you find out that ground guys who get into that kind of position realize, they get that revelation, that realization about how important Marine tactical air is to them.

Q: And kind of leaping ahead too, someone else, or I saw somewhere that one reason that they get Marine aviation in places too is the fighters.

General Howell: You got it. That's what I'm talking about.

Q: But it's the fighters, not the Harriers, not the rotary wing.

General Howell: They could care less. They want the old Hornet, and the EA-6

Q: And the EA-6B.

General Howell: They wanted the A-6s and in the old days, the old Intruders, the A-6s. But, they want the Hornets now. The Hornet is an incredible machine and that's what they want. That's what they're looking for.

Q: We'll talk more about that later.

General Howell: Yes [laughing].

Q: [Laughing] But, anymore on Command and Staff?

General Howell: It was a good interlude. I was eager to get back to the fleet, once more, another great opportunity to get closer, and have fun, with my family. I found when I was in flying jobs that I was away a lot, even when I was at home. But, that was a nice time. That's when my son fell in love with soccer, and that's what took him through college. It was fun watching him do so well from the very beginning. He was just a great player and loved it. And getting to know my daughter...

Q: Did he get scholarships at college then, to play soccer?

General Howell: Yes. He went to two schools that he couldn't have qualified for if he would not have been a soccer player, and with a "B" average. It's funny. He went to UCSB [University of California-Santa Barbara] for two years and then moved to University of Richmond.

Q: Oh yeah, that's a great school.

General Howell: And he graduated from the University of Richmond. I couldn't have afforded to send him to that school. Yes, but you know, Mark Moore was right. It was something that I needed to do, plus it set me up to get back for a long time in the fleet. And one of the best things

out of that was my monitor, at that time, was a guy named John Church. We hadn't been in the same squadron but we had been in Chu Lai together and had a friendship. It's one of those things, and I'll never forget it as long as I live, he came to Command and Staff and got all the aviators [together]. He was the aviation monitor. He said, 'Okay, everybody. What do you want to do?' Then, he gets to me and says, "Well, Jeff, what would you like to do?" I said, "Man, I would love to go to Hawaii," because I knew that they had F-4's out there. He said, "You're in, as of today." Just like that [sound of fingers snapping to emphasis instantaneous positive response], "Okay, you got it." I said, "No kidding? [excitement and disbelief in voice]" He said, "Yeah, you got it. You're gone."

Q: Why did you want to go to Hawaii?

General Howell: Because I always wanted to go to Hawaii--well, the Brigade [1st Marine Brigade, Hawaii] had always, in my time, as a young lieutenant, the Brigade out in Hawaii had a reputation of being a great fighting force. So, it had a reputation for really being a super place to be stationed. Hawaii was a great--going through there on the ships and seeing it, I would say, "Wow! I love this place!" And then, the 1st Brigade had always had a wonderful reputation as being a great outfit. And, I knew that they had jets out there and so that was the main reason that I wanted to get into a squadron. And, was getting ready to head to work [phonetic] and Church helped me to setup to go to the RAG [replacement air group] on the way out, and get re-Fam'ed, get re-qualified. I was going to go through Yuma I guess. So, through [VMFA-] 101 and so I was really excited. About a week before we graduated I get a call from Phil Kruse--Phil and I had met when I had come out of country, out of Nam Phong, he was in Iwakuni, getting ready to go in. And, he was going to [VMFA-] 115 to be the maintenance officer. And so, we talked about it. And, we had never known each other before, but really were compatible and had a great conversation about the squadron. Well, he calls me, he had been the Group 1 [administration officer], and been the squadron XO; and he said, "I'm going to get a command. I'm getting a squadron. How would you like to be my XO?" I said, "Man, I'd love to be your XO." He said, "It's VMFA-212." He said, "I think that I can work it. I think the group commander will assign you." And he said, "When are you going to get out here?" I said, "Well, it will be the latter part of August because I'm going to go through the RAG and get a re-FAM." He said, "No, I've got to have you right now [laughing]." You know, it was one of those things? I said, "Ah Phil, I haven't flown in four years! I want to get back in the cockpit, so I'll be qualified." He said, "Aw, don't worry about that. We'll re-Fam you out in Hawaii." He said, "I need you now because we are going to deploy to Yuma in the Fall and

go over to WestPac in the Spring, so I need you as quick as I can get you.”

Q: This is right at May, or so, of '77?

General Howell: Yes, so we graduate and I pack up Janel. He gave me the chance to take a little leave and travel. So, we went cross country and visited her mom, and then visited my family, and ended up going through Las Vegas. And ended up in San Francisco, and flew over from San Francisco. But, we get there, I want to say in June, late June or early July, it seems like it was right before the Fourth of July that we arrived and poof [phonetic, gunshot noise made with mouth] we're in 212. And so, boom, there I am. The squadron had gone through a great convulsion, big turn around, because they were going to get into the UDP—unit deployment program. And we were going to be the second squadron to go in that. [VMFA-] 235 went before us. [VMFA-] 232 had come out of Iwakuni and arrived at K-Bay. They were really hurting there because the squadron had gone to the “four winds” and their machines weren't that good.

Q: 212 or 232 was really hurting?

General Howell: No, 232. But, 212 was hurting because they also had a big turnover. Kruse, because he was the Group 1, knowing he was going to get that squadron, over the last eight or nine months all the best pilots coming to Hawaii got assigned to that squadron. He loaded it. I mean he stacked it. It was just loaded. That's why we ended up with Manfred Rietsch, and George Tullos, and [William L.] “Spider” Nyland, and “Beaver,” [Don Zinn], Fred Freeland, Dog Maddocks, John Graham and just that whole load of guys that we had. I mean that was a load of outstanding aviators. When did you join the squadron?

Q: June of '79.

General Howell: Okay, so that was a little while.

Q: So, after that first pump, your first pump.

General Howell: Yes, that's right. But, the rest of the squadron, they lost a lot of their maintenance personnel. They had a big turnover, the leadership and so the squadron, when I got there I think that the squadron had three airplanes up on average everyday.

Q: And they were flying [F-4] J's weren't they?

General Howell: Yes, and it was sort of a flying club, only certain guys were flying kind of thing. It was really--morale wasn't all that great. But, Phil had his hands full. And so, together we went to work. I think that the squadron really came around. I think that Phil Kruse did a great job with that squadron. So, we started working at it. Then I found out that we had two, or three, TOPGUN graduates, we had four, or five, WTIs. You know Manfred Reitsch had been an instructor at Top Gun [U.S. Navy Fighter Weapons School] for four years. I realized, here I was and I wasn't even current. And so, I immediately went to Manfred. I guess that Manfred was the Ops O then, and I got with Phil too. I said, "Hey, if you'll agree, don't make me a section leader. Don't make me anything. I'm going to FAM and re-FAM, and then I'm going to be a wingman for my first several months here, or until I get comfortable. Plus, it will give me a chance to fly with all these guys and see what they're like." So, I took it real easy, and just low-key on the flying side, and sort of worked my way back into flying with these guys.

Q: Were you thinking about Col Morse [skipper from Vietnam]?

General Howell: Yes, that's the very thing that I thought about. That taught me a great lesson. So, I ended up flying wing for quite awhile there and getting re-fam'd, and getting comfortable. It didn't take real long because the airplane was the airplane. I was very disappointed in the weapons system. The radars were just awful. What was it, the AWG-9, or AWG-10? What did we have in the F-4J?

Q: I think it was the AWG-10.

General Howell: The AWG-10, yes.

Q: Which was not a good radar.

General Howell: No, it just burned up all the time.

Q: I remember the N and the B radar, I never flew a B, but the N was a lot better radar.

General Howell: TPQ-59.

Q: Lot better radar, pulse only.

General Howell: Yes. Big difference, and so the squadron was really suffering, really struggling with that. We worked hard at it though, and got in a pretty good avionics crew and started working. But, of course Hawaii was on the end of the supply chain, and priority, and everything else. So, that was tough, but we had a six week deployment to Yuma, and we all went there. Then, we sent a det to support a Red Flag [USAF advanced aerial combat training exercise] or a Green Flag I believe.

Q: Probably a Red Flag.

General Howell: And, being the “friendly executive officer,” I got to stay in the rear with the gear. And that really pissed me off.

Q: Down in Yuma?

General Howell: Yes, but there would usually be one or two airplanes around there that needed testing, so I got a little bit of flight time, but I was really upset about that. Then, we had two terrible things happen while we were there. One, I think it was [VMFA-] 251, one of the Beaufort squadrons had a mid-air in the break. The XO, and one of the wingman, got killed in that thing.

Q: I think it's [VMFA-] 451, sir.

General Howell: 451, you're right. Neal Patrick was the skipper of the squadron. I'll never forget going down there to pay my condolences. You know, he was an old, old friend. We went through flight training together.

Q: Did it kill all four of those guys?

General Howell: No, just two of them got killed.

Q: Was “Little John” Cummings a part of that?

General Howell: He was the backseater in the--it was a three plane. It came in as a three plane and the leader forgot and broke into his wingman. Instead of having the wingman break, and then him break. He broke into the wingman. And so he, the leader, the front-seat got killed. And I think the front-seat or the back-seat of the Dash-2 got killed, and everybody else got out. John made it, thank God. You know, he's a great guy. So, that was just terrible. Then, we had an airplane making an intercept, a supersonic intercept, over the 2301 [warning area], east of Yuma there, had an engine burn through that just severed the controls to it's stabilator, did a violent pitch-up and tumble and the two guys, one was "Coyote"-- Dick Cote. What was the other guy's name? They both got out of it. It was just remarkable, because the g forces were just incredible on these guys. They ejected, but then I got to be the head of the accident report detail. So, I had spend time-- remarkable story though, that airplane did this violent...Boom! then pitch-up and then tumbled, and these guys eject and then it just went into a flat spin, and when it hit the desert floor it was just flatter than a pancake [sound of hands slapping together], just BAM!!! Of course, it burned up, but it burned up within just a very small area. I mean the airplane wasn't scattered anywhere. It was just poof [phonetic], all just smashed.

Q: So, it made it easy to investigate?

General Howell: Yes, and of course, it was a mangled mess. We go out there the first time and...one other bad experience is when we got a Reserve [CH-] 53A. A CH-53 took us out there and I'm in my "Charlies" [USMC uniform] in that thing and that crap, hydraulic fluid, from all over just ruined a set of Charlies going out there, out in the middle of the desert. [We] find that place, [then] look at it saying, "Oh, my God." I call the Navy Safety Center and say, "Hey, can you give us some help?" We're coming right away." And, we found out that there had been several of these instances on the east coast, just in the last several months. A guy comes out there, just to ream our [phonetic]--the next day he gets there. We go back out to the desert. He was a Navy lieutenant commander, who had been doing that forever I guess. He goes through this mangled mess and he says, "There it is [nonchalantly]." He just goes, "There it is" [General Howell surprised at how easily the lieutenant commander identified and found the problem]. There was a hole he saw, and he was looking for it. A hole burned through the fuselage and into the fuel cell, and right underneath the tail there. It had severed the controls. So, that was it. He said, "All I need you to do is send a truck out here, pull that engine. Pick up that engine and that's all that I need. That will tell the story. We're having too much of this." They had to beef up the engines

right there, and put in some extra liner right there, and what have you, to knock that stuff out. But, that happened while we were there. So, it was a very colorful, and active, deployment. But, we got a lot done and came back home for Christmas.

Q: You had a MCCRES [Marine Corps Combat Readiness Evaluation System] in February, do you recall how that went?

General Howell: It [MCCRES] went very well. [Mike] Sullivan ran that thing. He loved us because we flew him. By that time, we have our systems up and we're doing a lot better, and he just thought that we were great. We did have such good pilots, and we had some great "many-V-many". Of course, Sullivan loved that stuff. We'd just keep putting him in an airplane and have him fly with us. So, he just gave us great grades. But, that training area was so easy to get to and we spent so much time doing ACM [air combat maneuvering]. That squadron was highly qualified in ACM.

Q: It was difficult to do air-ground stuff, wasn't there a shortage of ranges for that?

General Howell: Yes, very difficult. We went over to Kahoolawe, and PTA [Pohakuloa training area]. But, that was very difficult. Another thing that I discovered when we got out to WestPac, of course, we lost a bird on our first TransPac going over.

Q: Was that Rob Tucker?

General Howell: Yes. And [Lance] Wismer. Wismer was back-seat. They came around on landing at Midway and the gear broke off on landing. It wasn't his fault. We found out, that gear had been put on that airplane two weeks before and only had one landing on it. And somehow when they milled it at re-work they weakened it and the thing just broke. So, it breaks off and the stub catches the abort cable at Midway, going the wrong way. It just ripped that airplane around, drops down on one the fuel tanks, it burst into flames. These guys twirl around on the runway and just come to a halt, in flames. Poof [sound of rocket powered ejection seat going off and plane engulfed in roaring flames]!!! They eject from the ground, do a tumble, and thank God they had a wind there that carried them about 50 feet away from the fire. They both got out of it okay.

They did a one tumble and they were in the chute. I was the accident investigation board on that one.

Q: Were you on that one.

General Howell: [Yes], and I don't remember that. But, they found the wheel down at the end of the runway. When that wheel broke off it just kept going and ended up off the runway on the other end. They brought it back and found that break. It was just a mechanical failure.

Q: It wasn't a hard landing or anything?

General Howell: No.

Q: Tucker was such a great pilot.

General Howell: He was an excellent pilot. So, he just had a mental problem, an attitude problem, but he was a gifted "stick and throttle" man.

Q: How did that WestPac deployment go?

General Howell: It was a good deployment, and significant for me. We finally get over there and start flying again with these guys. Low and behold Phil Kruse gets an order, he was a standby for War College, and so somebody didn't go and he gets ordered to go to War College. And he decided to accept it. So, he left.

Q: In the middle of the deployment?

General Howell: Yes, in the middle of the deployment. So, we had a change of command. Here I'm still Major Howell and I get the squadron as a major. I was a lieutenant colonel-selectee though. I'd been selected for it. But, so that was a great thing for me to get command of the squadron. I'm just glad that happened over there. Phil Kruse was a great guy. He still is. He's actually down in Corpus Christi, as a simulator instructor there at NAS Kingsville. Phil just could not be hard on a troop, so he never had an office hours where anybody was ever found guilty [laughing].

Q: [Laughing].

General Howell: He let guys off.

Q: Did he?

General Howell: Oh, troops loved it. And, there was also a war. I mean we just had a war going on between a sergeant major and the maintenance chief. They were both conniving jerks. The maintenance chief was a lot more highly qualified than the sergeant major, and he knew it. He intimidated him, so he got a lot of the staff NCOs on his side. That sergeant major was sort of put in a terrible position and battled him. So, the morale in the squadron, because of that, was really affected.

Q: Among the enlisted troops?

General Howell: Among the enlisted troops. And it was hidden very well. It all came to a head after I'd been the squadron commander for about a month or two. I get back from a Cubi [Point] cross-country, and land. Manfred doesn't want to tell me what's going on. He meets me at the airplane so I know--this was on a Sunday afternoon. I said, "What's up?" He said, "Everything is okay." I said, "That's not a very good answer. What do you mean?" [Manfred says]: "Well, everything is okay." [General Howell responds]: "Well, tell me why it's okay." [Manfred]: "Well, we got your tires repaired." And I said, "What do you mean?" [Manfred]: "Well, somebody slit all your tires on your car." [General Howell whispers]: "Oh, really [surprised, not upset but ready for action]."

So, I get the sergeant major in, and other people, and I said, "What's going on?" And they say, "Sir, well, you're hated by your troops. They really hate you." I said, "Really?" Then, and so I said, "Well, can you tell me why?" [They said], "Well, you're so hard on them. When you have office hours you throw the book at them--you give guys--you restrict them and fine them and all that stuff. Col Kruse didn't do that. You do that, so they just hate--they think that you are awful. Some of the Mickey Mouse rules and regulations around here, everybody blames you for them." And I said, "What are you talking about?" [They said], "Well, this and that." I said, "Well, I didn't say to do that." [They said], "Yes, but they are there and somehow you're getting the blame for all of that. So, it's all coming together." [Then someone else says nervously, yet matter of factly]: "You're not liked by your people." I said, "Okay, tomorrow morning I want to meet with every Marine out in the ball field, out in the middle of the field there, away from the hangar here.

It's sergeants and below. No staff NCOs and no officers, just me and them." [Then someone says]: "Sir, you don't want to do that. You might not live through that." I said, "Well, we'll take that chance [smiling]." So....

Q: Who was warning you about that? Who was saying that the sergeant major?

General Howell: Yes, this was the sergeant major, and of course he had talked to a couple of the officers and everybody was all concerned. I said, "Hey, either I've got to do this or I'd better quit," you know? So, I go out there with these, and I was with a bunch of angry young Marines, and they just hated my guts. So, I said, "This is what I hear. I know that this has occurred...you know, the tire slashing. Somebody is really upset with me, and apparently a lot of you are, if not all of you." So, I said, "What I want to do, what I would like to do is to, I've got a piece of paper, I just want to write down your grievances. I'm not going to associate any names with them. I just want to write down all the reasons why you guys hate my guts, and I'll answer to them where I can and where there is something that I need to look into, I'll look into it. But, we'll come back together and I will answer all of your questions. We are going to get this straightened out between us because we've got a bad thing here, and if I'm this awful then we need a new CO. But, I don't think I am. But, let's find this out." And so, they went through a laundry list of things that they had been made to do in my name, things that I had never even knew were going on, and it was part of this war between these NCOs. And I said, "That's bullshit. I didn't say that. I'll look into that. I'll find out what's going on." And then, there were some other things, like the office hours. They were really upset with me that I'd actually--when a guy came in, who had ripped down a door on a hooch when he came back drunk from town, that I actually punished him for it, you know? [They said:] "Colonel Kruse never did that." And so, I said, "Okay, let's do this [raising hands]...how many of you have had office hours under me since I've been the CO?" I think I'd had five or six of them raise their hands. I said, "Okay, now keep your hands up. Everybody look around now. You guys put them down. How many of you have been punished by me when you were found guilty?" They [the Marines who had office hours] all raised their hands and went, "Yeah, yeah, yeah!" I said, "Okay. Now here is my question: for the rest of you Marines, who haven't had office hours, why should you follow the rules? If these guys break the rules and don't get punished, why the hell should any of us follow the rules? Why don't we just go out and do whatever the hell we want to do? And some of these guys start saying, "Yeah! yeah!" They start looking at these guys and going, "Hey, asshole! You deserved it!" You know, that kind of stuff.

So, I started getting people thinking about why they were so upset. I said, "The reason

why we do rules is because Marines have to abide by them. Marines have to have unit discipline and self-discipline, and if you are not willing to carry that responsibility, then--this is not a college campus. If you were a college boy in a fraternity you could do a lot of the stuff you are doing now and get a slap on the wrist." I said, "You are a U.S. Marine. There are certain expectations you have to have and I will demand it, as long as you are in my squadron that is what is going to happen. And, the people who abide by the rules will get promoted and will get their just dues, and the people who break the rules will get theirs. So, that's just the way that I am. So, you're going to have to live with that. I'm not going to back off of that."

And, I saw in the back that a lot of guys were nodding their heads, you know saying, "Yeah, yes, that makes sense." But, a lot of it was just Mickey Mouse BS, and rumors. I mean rumors! Just rumor after rumor, "Well, we hear this—!" I said, "Oh, boloney!" [General Howell doing impression of one angry young Marine says]: "We hear that you're going to do this—we hear that you are going to extend us here an extra month and not let us go back." It was just rumors, foul and malicious just bad-mouthing, and all that. It was just a long list. So, when that thing was over I said, "Okay, here is what we are going to do—. I'm going to go check on these things and see why they've been said, because I don't know anything about them, and then we are going to come back together in a week and we're going to talk about it. And, I'll tell you what's right and what's wrong." But, I said, "Between now and then and forever, I am 'rumor control officer' in this squadron and anytime you hear a rumor you come right to me and ask me and I'll tell you whether it's a good rumor or not. But, let's knock off all this petty bullshit." I reinforced what I expected. I said, "Here is what I expect from you—we are Marines and we just have to act like Marines, and conduct ourselves like Marines. So, you've got to expect this. But, we're all in this thing together and I guarantee you that I'll be as fair as I possibly can and support you to the best of my abilities, so we can get the job done and be ready for combat. That's why we are here." And so, we sort of disbanded. Now, they're still grumbling. But, I think that really helped clear the air, sitting in with them. Two weeks later we came together and went over it. I just told them, "It's bullshit—I'll get rid of that—It isn't going to happen—I've stopped that—that's just a rumor—It's not true—." And, I was able to get through a lot of their stuff. Then I said, "Okay, we're going to meet next month. And, we are going to talk and see what else [is going on]." So, we started monthly meetings that I carried throughout the whole rest of the time I was CO. With my grunt background I had never wanted to do that. I always wanted to work through the chain of command and go through the staff NCOs, but I realized that I had to go and talk to those Marines. I had to find out what was on their minds.

Q: How did you handle the sergeant major and maintenance chief?

General Howell: I got with them and I said, “You’ve got to knock this crap off. You’ve got to start acting together.” And they both went, “Oh well, sir, we don’t know what you’re talking about.” And I said, “Oh bullshit! You do know.” I never really could cut through that, but the minute we got back to Hawaii I got rid of those guys.

Q: Both of them?

General Howell: Both of them. I got in Sergeant Major Strausser, that was one great American and a great Marine. He came in and it was the first time he’d ever been with the air wing. He’d been a company first sergeant and a sergeant major for something like eight years. Then, he comes into a squadron. He was great. I just loved him. Then, we had a Hispanic, MSgt Reyes, who was the maintenance chief, great, great guy and a great leader. Those guys got along like champs. That just solved a lot of those problems. So, things got better. Another critical problem that started before Phil left was that we sort of had family problems. But, that was the first deployment where people left there families in place, instead of sending them home. I had all kinds of problems. I had people going back and forth. We had to send ten different Marines back during that six month deployment to look into a personal problem they had back home. We had one Marine whose wife was stolen by a squadron mate, took her away from him. We had one wife who was actually doing prostitution in their quarters. I mean, it was just ridiculous, some of the stuff that was going on. We did not prepare our families well for that deployment at all. So, one of the things that we did once we got back from that, and started the year between [deployments], was that we really worked hard at preparing our families better for the next deployment. I think we really did a great job as a team to turn that around. Our wives had a lot to do with that.

Q: Is that where Janel sort of got into that aspect of it, family readiness?

General Howell: Big time. She was a main player, but she’ll tell you that she really believes that the staff NCO wives really had a lot to do with that, helping. They helped take charge and get the wives together and support--they basically put together a, and it was something that we had never done before in the Marine Corps, senior wives and older wives, both staff NCO and officer wives, we actually had what we called the “212 Wives’ Association,” and it was both enlisted and officer. That was something that had been unheard of before where they came together as a team to support

the young wives, and help the young wives. Then, we set up an active program to take care of that. And so, that really helped. That next deployment we didn't have one incident, not one Marine had to go home because of a family problem, that whole six months, that next six months. So, it was really a remarkable change in that regard. And I think that the morale of the Marines really improved. I think our training was excellent. I just think that we made a great team. Nobody is perfect. We had a couple of guys that ended up being, my mistake in leadership by putting them in leadership positions that they should not have been in, and so I had to change some things. That's part of life when you are dealing with people. But, as a rule that squadron, I think, was one of the finest fighter squadrons in the Marine Corps during that period, and highly qualified for combat. I think that we were ready to do anything that the nation would call on us to do. That's what it is all about. I was very proud of 212. I think we had a great group and I really believe that the morale was very high, and the guys really loved being in that squadron, and loved what they were doing. To this day, I even get letters, and now emails, from former enlisted guys that still want to check in and one of the most fulfilling things you can hear from, not a so young guy now, but at the time he was a young guy say, 'That was the greatest squadron that I was ever in and you were the greatest skipper.' You know? And they don't have to say that. That really makes you feel good.

Q: And, they had been in throughout their Marine Corps career.

General Howell: Yes. Another episode that happened, and once more is "Howell's Bad Judgment," and I learned a lot from it, was about two months to go on that first deployment I all of the sudden got called in by the group commander and he said, "It's the end of the fiscal year. They've got a bunch of missiles that are going to expire in their service life, so we can go shoot them. How would you like to go down and do a missile shoot down in Cubi Point?" And so, I said, "That's a great idea. I'd love to do that." Well, I was warned, "Well the weather is probably not going to be too good. It might be dicey this time of year." And, I said, "We will take the chance." That was a big mistake. We deployed the squadron down there and got into a terrible rain situation. The Navy didn't give us a hangar. We had an open-on-both-ends kind of shed that we could put our airplanes in; get about four or five airplanes in there at a time. But, we actually had in a thirty day deployment we had ninety inches of rain at Cubi Point. I mean that concrete deck had about three inches of water running over it almost continuously. The planes got soaked. We had mildew in the avionics boxes. We had Marine flight line personnel getting trench foot because of the water. In that 30 day period, I think we only flew about sixty hours. It broke a couple of times, and then we'd go out, and the range would be closed because of weather. We just

had one big storm after another coming in. I mean almost continuously. That just, was a test of patience. I almost lost it a couple of times. I went out on the flight line a couple of times, down at the end of the runway, and just cursed the storm, “Knock this shit off (yelling)!” (laughing). It was just awful.

Q: That would tend to hurt morale.

General Howell: It really hurts morale when you’re not flying in any squadron. There was Olongapo; the troops were getting over to Olongapo, and they’d come back and we’re not flying. So, they go back to town, and sometimes they say, ‘I know that it’s going to be bad weather,’ so, a lot of guys they wouldn’t come back and—we had a lot of discipline problems of Marines being UA [unauthorized absence] and late for reporting, that kind of stuff, and wanting to get married. [We had Marines] falling in love with a gal who was taking them to bed for the first time in their lives, so they just thought that that was the love of their lives. We had all kinds of Marines who wanted me to get them approval to get married and bring this young woman with them, back home to Hawaii. We went through that. That month was a big mistake. Then, getting out of there, getting the airplanes back up and getting them home was a struggle. It was a big time struggle. The bird that I had, we had to abort twice and go back in with either a fire light or a utility hydraulic light, got back in there [to the hangar] and found out that it was just an electrical short. But, when you get it you can’t screw with it.

Q: Especially if you’re going all the way to Okinawa.

General Howell: Yes. So, that was a struggle. Then, trying to get those birds up to TransPac, which was difficult.

Q: Was that right at the end of the deployment, sir?

General Howell: Yes, it was only a month from the end.

Q: Did you get any missiles shot sir?

General Howell: One or two. That was it. And, Colonel Johnson was the new group commander, and he just couldn’t believe that it was as bad as I had told him that it was. It was really funny, the

day that he came down to visit the weather broke open and we went out and flew.

Q: Wouldn't you know it (laughing).

General Howell: And he just thought, "Howell, you're a wimp." He just thought I was, you know. So, I don't think that he was too impressed with me at all, but that's the way it goes.

Q: In all of this what were your goals for the squadron? Where did you want to take it?

General Howell: I just looked at the situation right there and there was the—the Vietnamese Army had invaded Cambodia, so there was a war there and there was talk of us going and doing that. So, I thought that we were in a situation where we would be committed to combat and I really believed that. I've just always in any command I've had, all the way up to MarForPac, my view is that I try to keep my goal just very simple, but stay on it. For that squadron, I just told them, "We must do everything we can to be ready for combat, both air-to-air and air-and-ground combat, to the best of our ability. So, let's focus and do everything that we can to do that." So, we had the guys, our maintenance and our ops, and everything, we just worked hard at being ready. "When they call we better be ready to go." That was my philosophy and told my Marines. So, that's what we worked at.

Q: Did you have a squadron talk, where you addressed the squadron when you took over?

General Howell: I don't remember that. Because Phil had been there and it was a turnover-over in Iwakuni it was just the same group of guys and, "Carry on." I was not a new guy in the squadron or anything.

Q: But, in a way, that makes it kind of worse doesn't it?

General Howell: It does.

Q: Because you are sort of one of the guys.

General Howell: Yes.

Q: Except, you'd been the XO.

General Howell: Yes, so the XO. So, they—and Phil had always—it was sort of the “good guy, bad guy” setup, and he was always the “good guy” and I was the “bad guy.” I think those guys really thought that I was a hard ass as the XO.

Q: Officers too?

General Howell: Yes. We had a lot of guys who wanted to look ragtag in their flight suits and wear any kind of t-shirt they wanted to wear Navy brown boots and long hair. We had a bunch of guys—I worked hard at that, trying to get those guys to square-away.

Q: They were pretty rowdy too, weren't they?

General Howell: Yes, but that never bothered me a whole lot. Rowdy, I thought that that came with the game. So, we had one incident when Phil was over there that Pat Faulkner, who I told you had been in the squadron at Chu Lai, he was now a squadron commander of an A-6 squadron that was deployed over there. They were a great squadron. They really had high morale, and so we would meet up Friday nights in the club and just sing songs. We would make up songs, serenade them, and they made up songs to serenade us. They were good. And so, it was a pretty even battle and it sort of culminated, I guess, maybe a week or two before Phil left. We had a night, a big night there, and we were getting to be good friends, too.

Q: At Iwakuni?

General Howell: Yes, at Iwakuni.

Q: Did they have the “fighter bar” there?

General Howell: Yes, and we ended up after Happy Hour was over, with a big “yen roll.” Do you know what a “yen roll” is?

Q: Yes, but for history's sake, can you describe it?

General Howell: Everybody throws in—as I recall everybody at the table threw in at least five dollars, if not ten bucks, into a big pile on the table, and then you go around the table rolling dice. And we added the squadron numbers, 212, plus it seemed like this was 452 or 252, we added the two numbers and came up with...

Q: [VMA [AW]- 242?

General Howell: It might have been 242. And so, the total number became the magic number for the “yen roll.” And so, whoever hit that number, just rolling aces, every time you’d get an ace you add, and as long as you get an ace you get to keep rolling. If you don’t get an ace you pass the dice to the next guy and it goes around. And, just by coincidence, a Det of “electric” EA-6B guys had come down off of *Midway*, in at Atsugi. They were in port and they had flown down there, and they say, “Can we join your ‘yen roll?’ And we say, “Yeah! Come on in! (loud, jovial, enthusiastic yelling from 212 and 242 officers),” so those guys were in on this thing. We go around the table, and go around, I mean it seemed like it took forever, but it was fun. And everybody’s drinking and carousing and laughing at each other. Low and behold, get to the end there where you’re going for the final aces and you start pulling die out until you’ve got one dice left, for the last ace, and an EA-6B guy won this thing. He won this big pile of money there. I’m sure that there were 300 or 400 dollars in this thing. And of course, the rules of the “yen roll” are that you go to town and you’re only allowed to spend it on “lewd and lascivious enterprise,” and then you’re given thirty minutes, and then the rest of the group can come out and find you. Then, you have to share your loot with them, and the party goes out in town. So, when those guys leave and we are counting the clock, we decide that—I don’t know if you remember the Iwakuni main club had this long-narrow room called, “The Sumo Room,” it was sort of a private dining room that sort of ran along the side of the building. It wasn’t a part of the bar. It was separated by a wall, and it had a door at either end of it, one door right by the bar and another door into the dining room. It was just a long-narrow room. Well, when we go into the Sumo Room we decide to have a--well, they chased us out [of the main bar] because we were making so much noise. So, we go in the Sumo Room and we decide to have a wrestling championship between our champion Sumo wrestlers and theirs, in Pat’s squadron. So, we have Dan Driscoll and John Graham as our champions. And they had a couple of big husky guys. So, they start wrestling. We were, of course, ordering drinks and screaming and carousing and cheering them on. Driscoll and Graham are doing very well. They were strong. They were powerful guys. And, in one of these matches a guy got thrown, WHAM! and knocked his shoulder out, big time! I mean he was in terrible pain, just writhing on the ground.

So, someone said, “We’d better call a doctor.” So, we call the dispensary and then here they come over with an ambulance. And, wouldn’t you know, but here comes in a corpsman and two corpsmen WAVES [female sailors], in these tight white dresses that they used to wear; and these girls are a little bit overweight, and they haven’t altered their outfits. And so, they’re bending over this guy displaying their posteriors and guys—here are these drunk guys watching and here these guys start making remarks, ‘Oh wow! Look at that [General Howell using comical impression of aviators slurring words together while attempting to sound charming]!’” And, then some of these other awful things were said like, ‘Man! I’d like to do—,’ this or that. And so, they pull him out of there and take the guy to the dispensary and low and behold—then they go to their head nurse there and report what had gone on—which was terrible! It should not have happened!

Q: Yes, yes.

General Howell: I can say that I did not do that, but I can also say, and I have to admit that I was there and that I probably heard some of it and obviously didn’t do anything about it. The Skipper was there. Everybody was there. We were all there. It was a big mob. But, nobody touched them and molested them or anything. But, they made some remarks that were not good at all for an officer and gentleman. Well, the next morning is Saturday morning now, and Dan Driscoll, who is the adjutant of the squadron, comes knocking on my door, “XO! XO [whispered yelling into General Howell’s door]!” And, I go, “Oh—what [sounding startled and suffering from a torturous hangover]!?!” Then, Dan says, “You’ve got to come right now. The skipper’s in trouble.” And so, I go down to the squadron. We were living in those little quonset huts down in little “Rainbow Village” in officer’s country. I go to the squadron and Phil’s sitting there at his desk just looking bad. I mean, of course, he’d had too much to drink like me, plus something is wrong. I said, “What’s up?” And he says, ‘Well the group commander just called me, and the base commander has just read him the riot act about what his nurse told him that happened there. And he just told me, in no uncertain terms, that I will either produce the officers who did that, or I will be relieved of command of this squadron [severe worry and sadness in voice]. So, we said, “Uh oh, this is not good. The skipper is going to try to support us. But, we can’t let the skipper be relieved.” So, we call everybody in, and we have an AOM [all officers meeting]. By this time...

Q: Saturday morning?

General Howell: Yes, in those days we usually worked on Saturdays. A half day. We didn’t fly,

but we worked on airplanes and admin, and then took the rest of the weekend off. But, we have an AOM and here are all of these hung-over guys sitting there. We brief everybody [on] what the problem is and we're just wrestling with this thing. And, here you'd get a couple of guys who'd say, "Skipper, I did it. Turn me in [with regret and shame in voice]." And Phil would say, "No, I'm not going to do that [matter-of-factly stated]." You know, one of these things, where Phil would say, "You're my guy. I was there, too. I didn't do it, but I'm the skipper and I should take responsibility." Then, the men would say, "No, Skipper! We can't let you do that!" You know, it was one those big emotional ordeals where everybody is upset and we're just thinking, "How are we going to get out of this jam?" And, I'll tell you, just at this moment we hear this PPPPBBBBRRRRRRRRFFFFF [phonetic] [sound of multiple jet engines lighting up], engine and motors revving up. And, we go, "What is that?" The next thing we know, these two EA-6s are rolling down the runway taking off. And we're saying, "They're going back to Atsugi." And we say, "THEY DID IT!!! THEY DID IT!!! (everyone joyfully yelling)!!!" [General Howell laughing forcefully].

So, we go—we got to the group commander and say, "Those EA-6 guys were the guys that did it." [General Howell still laughing while finishing story]. And the group commander is yelling "Well, I want to talk them." And, I said, "Well, sir, they are gone. They are not here." [General Howell still laughing].

Q: (laughing).

General Howell: And then, he calls up to the CAG [carrier air group commander] up at Atsugi; you know they belonged to the Navy CAG and he says, he [the group CO] demands, "I want those guys down here and I'm going to—!!!" And, the guys tell him, "Blow me and go pound sand. You can't have my guys." [laughing]. And so, that's how we got out of that. That was so bad, but that was the way that came out.

Q: Wow, what a great story. "Filthy minded A-6 guys."

General Howell: Yes, the EA-6 guys, they do some good work every once in a while. [General Howell laughing so forcefully he has to catch his breath]. We're not getting very far here though.

Q: So, you took over—so you moved Manfred up as XO?

General Howell: Yes, he became my executive officer. He did a great job. He was such a strong personality and when he had been the OpsO, we didn't know each other. Manfred was full of himself, particularly because of his Top Gun experience. He thought that he hung the moon, and his buddies who had done that were—the MAWTS guys and the Top Gun guys were sort of his clique. I wasn't a part of that and I was more subdued and more serious, and sort of hard on these guys. So, Manfred and I had never really gotten along very well. We weren't enemies, but we just—but, when I looked at the pecking order of seniority, he was the next senior guy. So, I said, "You're the XO." And so, we got in an office and just had "here's what I expect" kind of a thing. Manfred was a good Marine. He said, "You're the boss. I'll do whatever you tell me to do." So, we worked together and little by little came to be very good friends. Manfred was a great XO. He did a great job. We all drank too much, but there were times when he drank way too much. So, I called him on the carpet on that one time and said, "You've got to knock some of that off. You're the XO—." So, he did. He quit. Manfred is good people, and I think he did a wonderful job as executive officer.

Q: You put Bob Maddocks, or was it George Tullos as the Ops O?

General Howell: Yes, George was Ops and he did a great job. Maddocks was one of the guys, Driscoll was with him.

Q: Working in Ops?

General Howell: Yes. [Thomas E.] "Tut" Fitzpatrick, I think he was the 1 [admin] there for awhile there. Bill Frizell had been the 1 and I made him the maintenance officer, and he almost—he was like me—he almost had a baby when I told him [that he would be the maintenance officer]. But, he became a great maintenance officer. Then, Maddocks went down and worked for him in maintenance. So, we moved guys around. But, a big mistake was Tut Fitzpatrick. Tut, I put him there, and he wanted it so bad. I had misgivings.

Q: He wanted the 1 shop?

General Howell: He wanted the 3 [operations]. And, I told him that I give him a chance, and he came in after a certain period of time and said, "You told me that you'd give me this chance. It's time. Either play me or trade me." It was one of these things you'll never forget, he said, "Either

play or trade me.” And man, I almost said, “You’re traded.” But, I said, “I’ll [play you]” because I had promised him. So, I did and that was a mistake. When we went back to WestPac he was the Ops O.

Q: Instead of Tullos-- “Cajun.”

General Howell: Yes, and we had problems.

Q: You mean on your second pump [deployment to WestPac].

General Howell: Yes, on the second pump. George became the 1. They swapped. Before it was over I had to move Tut out of that, and it really broke his heart. I take the hit because I never should have made him that anyways. It was my mistake. I had made him a promise and my gut told me when I did it, to when I fulfilled the promise that, “This is a mistake.” It was a mistake, and the squadron suffered during that period. You know, we had this deployment to Korea.

Q: Right, Kwangju. I always thought that was really unique.

General Howell: It was unique. We had the potential to do great things, but never understood how important that was to the MEF [Marine expeditionary force] and to the Wing [1st MAW]. And, we let them down in some way because we sort of went our own way and sort of did our own thing. Part of it was the miscommunications and I didn’t, Tut just didn’t pick up on it, so I didn’t pick up on it. So, I think I might of gotten a bad fitness report out of that. I don’t know. But, a lot of it had to do with the communications, and the relationship between our operations and this MAGTF. It was, sort of, a put together operational MAGTF for an exercise kind of thing. They were either up in Osan or someplace, and we were down in Kwangju. So, it just, it was cold, we got snow.

Q: Talk about bad weather... we got some.

General Howell: We got snow down there and they had no snow clearing equipment, so there were days we could not fly in the mornings and the people up north could not understand why we weren’t [flying]. That was not a good situation, and a lot of it had to do really with communications. I went up and talked to the acting group commander. He was very understanding, but he had some guys who were working for him that were bad-mouthing us. It was

not good. But, frankly it was my responsibility, and at the very beginning planning, where we screwed up was the initial planning. We got the wrong word, and a lot of that had to do with the relationship between our 3 and the planners. We did not plan properly for that exercise. And so, we suffered. You know, piss-poor planning carries on and it carries over. We did a lot of flying, and did some good stuff up there.

Q: I remember flying up to Nightmare Range, near the DMZ.

General Howell: Yes, we had some exciting times up there, dropping together, and put on a pretty good show, too. Remember the General came and we put on a demo and we did good work. But, overall I did not help our squadron's reputation because those guys went back to Okinawa bad-mouthing us, and maybe they had good reason to do it. So, when all is said and done, I told Tut, "I've got to put somebody else in here. This is not working." And, I can't remember where he went, if he went up to group or what, or if he stayed in the squadron and did something else. I think that's when Cajun went back [into Ops].

Q: That's who I always remember being in there.

General Howell: Yes, and so that was a tough time. That was a tough situation. One of the worst things that you find in your life, anywhere you are, is having to fire somebody. That's one of the toughest things that you can do. Yet, it's better sooner than later once you get in that situation. I learned that. I learned that.

Q: From my perspective, of course you would have a different view, but it seemed like morale was good. I remember just sitting around in that hooch there, in Kwang-ju, every night having just a good time.

General Howell: Had a lot fun at the "old RIO's house" there?

Q: Yes, the "retired RIO's home," I believe that's what Larry Staack called it.

General Howell: "Smoke" [Staack] was there.

Q: And Barney Fisher...

General Howell: Barney Fisher, I think he was in the 1.

Q: I remember him being in maintenance?

General Howell: Well, I guess he and “Dog” [Robert Maddocks] became good buddies and ended up flying F-18s together. But, everything from that whole thing, the squadron itself, overall I think had great morale and had a great time, and did great things. You know, there was one time when we were at Kwang-ju that we had a det in Cubi, we had a det in Okinawa, and we had a det back in Iwakuni. We were flying airplanes as a squadron out of four different locations and did it successfully, and safely. That’s a stretch. That’s a stretch. Looking back on that I almost shudder, because that shows you the kind of talent that we had in that squadron where we could allow people to do those things and take that responsibility because we had so much capability and guys who could do it without getting in trouble. But, there were personnel things that you know, you always have certain people who—old “Thumper” or “Rabbit”, what was his name? The RIO? Do you know who I’m talking about?

Q: I don’t remember a “Thumper” in there.

General Howell: Yes, well everybody called him Thumper because he enjoyed liberty so much. Do you remember?

Q: I remember “Wildman” Dave Bender having that reputation.

General Howell: Oh, yes, “Wild Man,” he was an interesting character.

Q: He was an interesting character.

General Howell: But, this guy was really upset that I did not assign him to go to WTI. That was when we were in between deployments, and his wife got all upset with me. I just said, “There are other people—.” Well, I had assigned Wismer and you know that Lance was such a cynical guy. A lot of people thought, “Gee whiz! That guy is always bad-mouthing everybody and down on people, and all that.” And he was, but he was an excellent RIO. I always assigned people according to what I thought their combat capability was, and their flying capability. So, these guys

were nice guys, but there were not as good in the airplane as him. So, I figured that the guy who is the best in the bird ought to be going to the top level school. That was an interesting episode, too; this guy and his wife. She ended up running off with her choir director when we were deployed that second time. So those things, there are always personnel issues and people issues. But, overall, I can say confidently that the squadron really did well. Of course, I had a mid-air [collision]. Do you remember that?

Q: Yes, please talk about that. That was up in Misawa [Japan], as I remember.

General Howell: That was when we were back [at Iwakuni]. I want to say February or March. In 1980, we were about a month and a half or two months away from coming home and the United States and Japan had made a deal where the Japanese Air Defense Force, [they] wanted to learn more about air combat maneuvering. You know, they had always just been an interceptor, not be aggressive. They decided together that they needed to learn more about offensive air warfare and that kind of stuff. So, they sent us up there to teach, sort of, a basic air combat maneuvering to a group of fighter guys. They were flying Mitsubishi F-1s, which was sort of a converted Japanese trainer. It was sort of like a T-38, a mini T-38, if you can imagine anything being smaller than a T-38. But, it was a little two-engine, supersonic, little fighter that looked just like a needle. But, it was one of the few airplanes that an F-4 could actually outturn in slow flight. The wing loading was awful.

Q: If you could find it on the radar.

General Howell: Yes, the wing was so tiny on that thing. So, we were up there and we went through one week of 1v1, and then the next week was 2v2 training with them. I think we had six planes up there. "Spider" Nyland was up there, and Driscoll and Tullos, and of course, "Clutch" [Gary A. McCutcheon] and we flew together almost all the time, so he was my backseater, and "Pagan" [John Graham] was there. The first week went well and we had some pretty strict rules. You know, thank goodness that we had these WTI guys, and Top Gun guys, because they knew how to set something like this up. The strict rule was that, everything will be in English. No Japanese; all in English. The course rules will be strictly abided with and briefed in between every hop. The old ACM rules of, 'you never enter a mature engagement unless you have everybody in sight', and, that kind of stuff, we went through all that. So, we went through these briefings and as a rule we would get through a couple of moves with these guys and then knock it off, and then set

up another one. Then, we get into one, and knock it off. As a rule, the F-4 normally had an advantage, but we never pressed to embarrass them. But then, by the time that we got into 2v2s, in a couple of moves the F-4s were behind them and working on them, and I'm saying, "knock it off, go to..." So, they were getting a little bit upset, particularly some of their older, more savvy, pilots. They wanted to get a piece of a Marine. They wanted a little vengeance. So, I go up with this section that had a wingman who was a former F-86 guy, who had a lot of time in the F-86. He had 1,000 hours, but he only had maybe 80 hours in the F-1. He didn't have a lot of time in it, but his leader had a lot of time in it. He was like a major or lieutenant colonel, one of their more sage pilots. He had his fangs out. We were setting up with GCI [ground controlled intercepts] control about 30 miles separation and coming in, engagement, a couple of turns to an advantage, and knock it off. That is what it was all about. You know, working 2v2. We briefed this at length—in all English. Well, after the first engagement we separate, and then all the sudden we hear all this chatter in Japanese. These guys are indignant. They're talking to the GCI in Japanese, and to each other. They want to score a victory here. So, what this guy does, using the GCI, he puts his wing[man], of course, their radar, they had a gun radar, in that thing, but little else. Our radars were working good, those AWG-10s in the 'S' [model of F-4], they were in pretty good shape.

Q: That's right.

General Howell: So, we were seeing these guys fifteen or twenty miles away, and setting up for them. Well, he puts his wingman about four or five miles in front of him, and he gets behind him. And they come in, racing in, toward us on GCI control. I'm in a combat spread, Clutch and I in one aircraft on the right, and Pagan and I think he had Coyote in his back-seat.

Q: Oh, yes. They flew together.

General Howell: Dick Cote and John Graham, for the record. So, we are coming in combat spread. We've got about a mile and a half of separation. He's stepped up a little bit on me, on the left. And we're coming at them, sort them out, see what's happening, and decide very quickly, "Okay, if the lead guy turns on us, whoever he turns towards will engage him, and the other guy will go for the trailer. If he blows through, we will just let him blow through, and we will both converge on the other guy and go from there." And that's exactly what happened. The wingman is coming through fast! Just like a rabid ass ape, just shoom! He just shoots right between us, and then here comes—so we just watch him. He's gone, he ain't turning, he's gone, okay. So, we stay

after this one guy, and so the leader sees me, and we pass. He makes a big hairy turn behind me and I just go into the vertical. I just reef it up, I've got lots of knots, we're doing 450 or 500 knots, or more. So, I just pull into the vertical and Pagan turns in on him. So, you've got one of these deals where the guy is in sort of a level, to nose-high turn, and here's Pagan coming around, trying to get to his six [rear]. This guy can't come up with the wing loading on this thing, once he's committed he went to this big turn. He can't get his nose up on me. Then, he sees Pagan. So, he's holding Pagan off, and I'm up here. I kick it around, coming back down, and all this time this guy is screaming in Japanese. We found out later that he was telling his wingman, 'Get your ass back in here! These guys are going for me! Where are you! Get in here!' Well, the wingman has made a big hairy turn, he's coming back in. I'm coming down. I've got this guy bore sighted. I mean that I'm over him and I'm coming down. Pagan can't get his nose on. He's trying to get around, and I said, "I'm engaged!" Then, Pagan would say, "I'm engaged!" Then, I said, "'Pagan' I've got a shot!" Then, he'd say, "No! No! I'm engaged! I'll get him! I'll get him!" So, I tell Clutch—I sort of pull my nose up a little bit, and I say, "Let's do a belly-check," because we didn't know what happened to the wingman. So, I go inverted and we are looking behind us, and this wingman was coming back in. He sees his lead. He sees Pagan. He doesn't see me, and he's turning in, nose-high, coming after Pagan. And, he flies right in front of me, and just takes the tip of my nose right off—just BAM!!! And, he takes a big chunk out of his stabilator.

Q: How big of a chunk was that?

General Howell: I'd say about six by eight inch chunk, and it took about three inches off the tip of my nose cone. A foot closer and beeeewwwrrrrrsshhh!!! [phonetic--sound of large explosion and fireball), and, there would have been a huge explosion. A foot further away and we never would have touched. I didn't know what had happened. We were upside down looking, and then all the sudden—BAM!!! I right the airplane and then the noise. Of course, the tip of my nose is off and all of this wind is blowing into the radome. The radar starts coming apart and all that fiberglass is just unraveling on that radome, and all that racket. So, I just say, "Knock it off! Knock it off! Something has happened. I think we hit somebody." But, we really didn't know.

Q: Because you were looking back?

General Howell: Yes, and so Pagan comes and joins me. He looked me over. Of course, I put the needle on the nose [TACAN navigation needle pointed toward home base]. We were flying out of

Misawa in the wintertime, and we've got poopy suits on. But, that water is so cold. I'm just thinking, "Oh, Lord, I don't want to go into the drink today. It's cold out there." We were about 60 or 70 miles off the coast. So, we just coast back in, with the needle on the nose. Pagan is right there, and I look over and there are the two Japanese birds. So, I told Clutch, I said, "I know we hit somebody. I wonder if we had an interloper some private airplane is in the drink right now. Some poor guy might be out there freezing to death." But, we come back in and made a straight-in landing and nothing is wrong. Everything works. No failures of anything, except the radar had quit on me.

Q: It must have been really mysterious?

General Howell: Oh, it was and I was really concerned, at that time, because the radome was unraveling and I was afraid my engines was going to eat that fiberglass and FOD [foreign object damage] the engine. But, it didn't happen. It was funny when Pagan looked me over, I said, "What do you think?" He said, "Beak, something is wrong with your nose." [laughing].

Q: [laughing].

General Howell: I said, "I KNOW THAT!!! How about the rest of the airplane!?" [prompted by the fact that it was patently obvious to General "Beak" Howell and Clutch that there was something wrong with the aircraft's nose. This is made doubly funny because General Howell had always been ribbed about his big nose, and was the reason for his call sign "Beak."] He said, "No, everything is okay."

That was a classic statement, 'Beak, something is wrong with your nose.' So, we get back and Spider who is the Safety Officer, comes walking out there when I get down. I said, "Hey, I've got to get out of this poopy suit, because I'm sweating it out," take a look, well he walks back in. Another thing, and it's one of these moments that you'll never forget; the plane captain on this Det, they are bringing us in, this kid is signaling us in. As I get closer to him, his jaw just drops. His jaw almost drops, he goes [General Howell re-enacting how far the kid's jaw dropped when he saw his plane]. I mean gaping [phonetic] wide open, saying, 'What happened!!!?' He sees this airplane with it's nose just all frazzled [phonetic].

Q: And, all that fiberglass was just all trailing behind.

General Howell: Well, it sort of curled. It was a curly-q, you know flapping around, like peeling an apple, the stuff was just all curled up. So, Spider comes back. I'm about out of my poopy-suit and he comes in, and he's got a piece of metal in his hand. He says, "This isn't supposed to be there. It's lodged in your nose-cone," and right at that time we are getting a call from our Japanese brethren saying, "We need to debrief quickly! We need to DEBRIEF, QUICKLY!!!" (spoken with Japanese accent, sense of urgency and worry). I say, "Okay, we're coming down. We're coming down." So, we come down after I get the poopy-suit off and get on a flight suit. I go walking down the flight line, and looking at the two birds, and just go walking by and see—just take a look and there's this big chunk, "Oh, there it is!" And, [I'm just] trying to figure out, "How did that happen?" So, we, together, with them—I mean they had a crowd in there and had all these little men with the helmets with the green cross on them, you know their safety guys with their straps on. They've got about 100 of them in this room. And we sit down together and debrief. We have pilots holding models of two F-4s and two Mitsubishi's walk through as we debrief, and then here it comes. It just all comes out. And the guy...

Q: You mean that they're following your words? There doing what...

General Howell: Yes, as we are talking about what happened, they just walk through it. And, low-and-behold, here is how it happened. They admitted, the guy admitted, he said, "I never saw you." As a matter of fact he said, "I didn't know that we had hit." He swears that he didn't know that it had happened.

Q: He didn't feel a thing?

General Howell: No.

Q: That's amazing.

General Howell: So, he re-entered a mature engagement. So, that's how that all occurred. We go down to base ops and got it reported, and the message got me into a lot of trouble because we put out a safety message, a "Red Raider," or "Red Ribbon," whatever those are called, or "Blue Blazer," the one that alerts the world that you've had an international incident. The Marine's nose contacted the Mitsubishi's tail, so they are saying, "It looks like Jeff Howell rammed this guy." Man, it goes all the way up to Headquarters [Marine Corps], the Pentagon, the Commandant gets a

call and he calls everywhere. The next morning, I get a call from the chief of staff of the wing and from Col [Ronald C.] Andreas, who was our group commander at Iwakuni. You know, the Wing was down in Okinawa and it's [commanded by] General [William] Maloney. He said, "I just got word that—the whole operation is off. You are grounded. You've got to stay in your BOQ room until General Maloney calls you. He wants to call you and talk to you personally." So, I said, "Stay in my room? I haven't had breakfast." [Colonel Andreas says], "Well, you've got to stay in your room. He's going to call you any minute." So, I sat in my damn room all day, and into the evening, waiting for General Maloney. And we're not flying. There is no flying. The guys are coming by and going, "What's up?" And, I'd say, "I've just got to wait for a call. Ya'll go carry on. Go to town and have some fun, or go get a hotsi bath or whatever." So, that afternoon, late in the afternoon, General Maloney finally called me. It was interesting kind of [conversation].

Colonel Andreas had called me a couple of times and told me, he said, "I'm sending a man up to do an investigation." And it was Chris DeFries, Colonel Defries, who is another good guy. He said, "He's coming up; he going to come up in a C-12." And so, we got that going. He said, "You'll be talking to him, but for right now just wait General Maloney." I said, "Well, I've been waiting and he hasn't called." So, Colonel Andreas said, "Well, he's going to call you today." Finally, General Maloney calls me, later on that day, and says, "Jeff, you know you really have a fine squadron and you did a great job." But, he says, "This is bad. This really looks bad." He said, "I might have to relieve you of command, for what's happened here." I just told him, "General it wasn't my fault." And, General Maloney said, "Well, read the message. It really looks bad. I got calls from the Commandant. He's in dutch, he's gotten calls from the Secretary of the Navy. Everybody is upset with what you did, you know?" And, I said, "Sir, I didn't do anything. This guy hit me. I didn't hit him." So, General Maloney said, "Well, it doesn't look that way on the message." And, I said, "I know that, sir. But, well..." He said, "Well, when you're up on the flagpole flapping around up there it's easy to be shot, up there. It's just one of those things Jeff, sorry about that. We'll see what comes out, but it doesn't look good." And, I said, "Yes, Sir. I did not do anything wrong. That guy, we have debriefed this hop and it was not my fault, but whatever you think is right." So, man I am down. So, finally though, the guys, the whole group of guys, come by the room. They had heard that I was getting this call, and they said, "Hey, let's go to the club." It's about five or six in the evening, and so we walk up to the Misawa O Club. We went to the bar and the other pilot is there.

Q: The Japanese pilot?

General Howell: Yes, the Japanese guy is there and we shake hands, and talk about it a little bit. Then, we go to dinner. And, we are sitting there with dinner and it's just a very somber affair. The guys were trying to laugh and scratch and pick up my spirits. I'm trying to be brave, but I've just got this lump in my gut. Here comes this little waitress, by this time it's eight or nine in the evening, and she says, 'Is Colonel *'Howrel'*, *Colonel 'Howrel'* [mispronounced Colonel General Howell in Japanese accent] here?' And I say, "Yes, that's me." So, she says, "You have a telephone call, a very important telephone call." So, I go to the phone and it's the chief of staff of the wing and I can't remember the guy's name but he was sort of a jerk. I'll remember his name sometime—[and he goes], "Where the heck you BEEN, colonel !?" and, I said, "Sir, I've just been at dinner, eating dinner." He said, "I've been trying to get a hold of you for an hour and a half [cut, aggressive yelling]!!! Where in the—have you been!!!" And he just chews me out up and down. I said, "I've been here and here am I, what can I do for you, sir?" At that time it didn't really matter. He said, "General Maloney received a call from the Commanding General of the Japanese Air Defense Force and they take full responsibility for what happened. They said, that it was their fault and they want to apologize. And, oh by the way, they think this is great training and they want to keep the training going." So, he said, "What's the condition of your airplane?" And, I said, "Well, we replaced the nose-cone. We had another nose-cone, so we replaced it. It's up. It's ready to go." And, he said, "Well, they want to start flying again tomorrow. Can ya'll start again tomorrow, and start training [excitement in voice]?" I said, "Yes, sir. We can do that. I'll be happy to do that." He said, "Okay." He said, "We made an agreement with the Japanese that this is a 'non-happening.' This was a 'non-happening.'" This was a 'non-happening. He said...

Q: That's the words they used, "non-happening?"

General Howell: Yes, I wish I had a recording. [General Howell continues to quote the wing chief of staff]: "It was a 'non-happening,' and so we want ya'll, if you can, to continue this tomorrow and for the rest of the week. Go back to flying and complete the training, and come home this weekend." I said, "Aye-aye, sir. Will do." And, it was just...

Q: It's like it didn't happen.

General Howell: Shoot, of course, in my heart I knew it happened. But, you talk about an emotional sine wave and roller coaster. It was just remarkable.

Q: Amazing.

General Howell: And, I went out and I flew the first launch of the next day, and was scared to death the whole time. I just knew that we were going to have a mid-air. I mean, it took me probably a month, or two, to be able to get close to another airplane in a fight. I've got to admit that I became very, very cautious. And it took a while. I got back on the horse and rode it, but I was very careful about it. But, that was an interesting, that was one of the most interesting episodes of my life, I've got to tell you. It sort of, out of all the combat I was in and everything—I realized at that moment how precious life is, and how close that was. I realized that you need to enjoy and appreciate the blessing of every single day, and what the day brings you; good or bad, you're there fogging the mirror and experiencing it. So, that was a great lesson in a lot of ways for me and it shows you how fickle life can be--you're in the 'cat-bird seat' one day, and then the next day it's all gone. And, I was lucky enough where it all came back, it could have been just the other way. And, General Maloney and I never talked about that incident again. I guess, he probably didn't think—I thought he owed me an apology. But, maybe in his mind he didn't tell me what I heard him say, I don't know. But, I didn't think he backed me up very well and maybe it was just the way the situation—the message and all of that. I had always admired him and liked him, but from that day on I never felt quite the same about the man, even though he was very successful and went on and commanded the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing afterwards.

Q: Interesting. That was an interesting time. Did you, recall any significant training operations during that WestPac, I remember going to the Philippines and doing a Cope Thunder, I thought was pretty intense.

General Howell: Yes, we had a great Cope Thunder.

Q: Any comments about that? That was pure air to air, but we had some bombing out there, too.

General Howell: We did. We did air-to-ground and we did some air-to-air. We had some air-to-air sorties with F-15 Eagles, and those guys were good. We held our own pretty well against some of those guys, and I was really proud of them. Dan Driscoll was my wingman on several of those missions and it was funny—on one of them I got into a fight and it got so intense that I actually had an engine flame-out and didn't even know it until the fight was knocked-off.

Q: Is that right?

General Howell: Yes, I had been flying on one engine. But, it was just good training. It was excellent training. Code Thunder was good training. The only issue-- we were flying out of Cubi and the thing was being controlled out of Clark AFB. So, we would fly out of Cubi, fly a sortie, land at Clark for refueling and then brief, and be briefing, and then fly another one and land back at Cubi. That took something away from it, not being there with the other people who we were flying with. The Marine Corps, once more I think the Air Force wanted to charge too much money for the BOQ or something, and it was a lot cheaper at Cubi, so it we flew out of Cubi. But, it was still a good experience.

Q: It was.

General Howell: We had a lot of dets. We had a corrosion control det down at Cubi, so we had an airplane down there being sanded and repainted the whole time that we were there. So, our airplanes stayed in excellent shape. Troops loved it down there. The troops always love the Philippines and the liberty.

Q: Everybody loves it down there.

General Howell: Yes, they did. It was just the weather.

Q: It was the wintertime in Iwakuni, you get down there and it was sunny. It was like Florida.

General Howell: Oh, it was wonderful. Sitting by the pool and a peso a beer, and you could get a good massage for a buck. It was just great. And, the flying was great down there. The weather was great for flying. So, we had dets down there almost every weekend, with guys going down there and doing ACM. Of course, Manfred would fly down on a Friday, and his division would have at least three sorties under their belt by noon on Saturday. He was something else.

Q: I'll never forget the time [Norman] "Dutch" Schlaich left his boots...

General Howell: (laughing and clapping hands together).

Q: (laughing). And, then leave and then flew back in his tennis shoes.

General Howell: Yes, (laughing) and I went out and met him. It just so happened that it was a Sunday afternoon, and I didn't do that all the time, but I was down at the squadron doing something and I saw him coming into the break. I said, "I'll go down and say, 'hi'." And, here's Schlaich; I walk out there and I can't remember who was with me, if it was Manfred or...

Q: Manfred was there.

General Howell: Who was the leader? I can't remember who, but I walk up and say, "Hey, 'Dutch' how are you?" And, he said, "Doing good, sir." Then, I said, "How did it go?" And, he said, "It was fine, sir." And, he sits there in his cockpit. I said, "You going to get out of the airplane?" And, he goes, "Well, I'm doing some things here, sir. I won't be done for a while. You go ahead Skipper, don't wait for me." (laughing). He didn't want me to see him in his tennis shoes [General Howell trying to catch his breath after laughing hard]. That was so damn funny. Then, I found out about it later on and he sat in that airplane for about thirty minutes until Manfred and I left. Oh, that's funny.

Q: I don't remember that part of it. But, I remember Manfred telling him, "Let's go. We're leaving. Just don't worry about boots."

General Howell: The shine guy, you know everybody put their shoes in the BOQ shine place, but sometimes he was closed, you know. If you didn't pick up your boots he'd throw them out.

Q: I think he was closed on Sunday.

General Howell: Yes, so Dutch had to leave his boots.

Q: I noticed you had setup a Safety Department in the squadron, and this was before that had become standard, or institutionalized, if I'm correct?

General Howell: I don't know.

Q: Do you remember anything about that?

General Howell: No.

Q: But, I remember that “Spider” was running the Safety Department. You had a real emphasis on safety.

General Howell: I think that was Spider more than me. Spider really, everything he does, he does right. He came to me and said, “I want to do this, and I think that this is important, and to give it the prestige, and the interest it needs, we need to make it a department, just like the 3 and the rest of those people, and make it separate and have our own program.” And so, that was his thing. I’d like to take credit and say, “Yes, that’s what I wanted to do.” But, that was his initiative, and I thought it was a good idea so I backed him up. But, I can’t take credit for that.

Q: And then, for that year, or 1980, VMFA-212 got the CNO Safety Award. So, that showed a real improvement, I guess from losing two airplanes the year before.

General Howell: Well, actually to tell the truth we got the CNO Safety Award for the period that we lost the two airplanes.

Q: Really? I thought it was for 1980. Well, we got it in 1982 also.

General Howell: We got it for 1980, too. But, we had actually gotten it back in 1977-1978. We had gotten the CNO Safety Award even though we lost two airplanes.

Q: For that year—wow?

General Howell: Because both of those were material failures and in those days they wrote them off. They didn’t apply to CNO Safety. That was amazing that we actually had two Class As and still got the CNO Safety Award. That’s more of Phil Kruse’s magic (laughing). One other incident, I can’t resist, and I know we need...we can’t talk forever on this, but...

Q: No, that’s fine.

General Howell: Another sea-story that seems to have taken on mythical proportions was—after

that—when we were over there that first time and we had that missile shoot, that didn't go well, we ended up with—we had one bird that we had to leave that was just not ready to come back and I left a group of maintenance guys to fix it, and a crew to fly it back. I left one officer in charge of that, he was in our maintenance department; I left him in charge of the det. And, they got the bird fixed and flew it out. I think Frizell, and I can't remember who the pilot was that flew it back...it might have been Cajun or Mad Dog, I'm not sure. They brought the bird back, and so we have to get that det back--I've got people stuck down at Cubi Point. I'm calling the group, calling the wing, calling everybody, and a week goes by. Then, ten days go by, and here are our Marines down there and I can't get transportation for them. And so, I finally call—it was more of these connections—I finally find out who the skipper of a [C-] 130 squadron. I said, "Can you help us?" And, he said, "We will take care of it." And so, we had a [C-] 130 that had been somewhere else, and sort of added Cubi to it's flight plan, and came in there. They told them that they were coming. It was going to be early on a Sunday morning, Bob Larkin, have you ever heard of "Arc'in Larkin?"

Q: "Arc'in Larkin," yes.

General Howell: Well, Larkin was in charge of that thing. This thing comes in, the gunnery sergeant who was in charge of this is standing by, with all of his Marines, in front of the BOQ and the BEQ waiting to go, and Larkin can't be found. Larkin has decided to spend the night out in town. That [C-] 130 waits, and leaves. That next day we get wind of what had happened, so those guys are still there. And, I got a hold of Larkin and I just lost it, on the phone just screaming at him. I'm told that they actually cleared out the hangar. Everybody left the hangar because I was screaming so loud at Larkin. People didn't want the troops to hear me. So after I chewed his butt out, I told him that, "You will move yourself and all your gear down into base operations, to the waiting room down there, at base ops, and you will live down there until every one of those Marines—you will find transportation for every one of those Marines and get them back to Iwakuni. Then, you will leave, but that's where you will be. You will not go anywhere else, except you will be allowed to go to the mess hall to eat, and you will be allowed to go to Chapel on Sunday. But, you will not go in town. You will not go anywhere else. That is where you will stay until this happens." So, Larkin had to stay...

Q: He did it, really?

General Howell: He did it, oh yes. But, he got them out of there pretty quick. I think they were out of there in three or four days, and he was back there with them. But, guys made up some stories I think about it—I just remember fussing at him. But, you'll hear Cajun and some other guys talking about what happened in the hangar when Howell was screaming at Larkin. But...

Q: I remember a couple of other incidents like that. I can believe that rumor. I can believe that. I can remember that time in Kwang-ju where we were having that meeting around that big table, do you remember that?

General Howell: Yes, I got upset. Well, it had to do with the checks.

Q: I felt like getting under that table.

General Howell: Well, I made a terrible mistake and then I let it happen [phonetic]. Then, I took it out on you guys because I thought--you know they got in TDY [temporary duty] checks and, "Hey, we've got these for everybody and it's great." So, I said, "Okay, well, let's pass them out." It was great, but then I found out that the troops couldn't get them, because they were under a different set of orders and they could not get paid until the TAD was over. And, I thought that Cajun and Fokker had tricked me. I felt deceived. They didn't lie to me. They just didn't tell me the whole story on that thing. So, here we are paying the officers extra money for the deployment and the troops aren't getting any. That just really galled me when I found out what I had done. I just let them know it. I think that might be the one that you are talking about. I think that's when we came to head with Tut, too. We weren't communicating well. I would ask him questions and not get straight answers, and I think that I just blew up one time with him. That's when we had the change because I lost total confidence in the guy. That was too bad. You know he got killed there—did you hear about that?

Q: No, I didn't hear about that.

General Howell: He went home, I don't know if he was still on active duty or not, you know his father—he was from a farm in either Arkansas or Alabama and his father had been killed, had been rolled over on a tractor on their farm, their place, and been killed. And, Tut was out there, I think on leave, helping his mother and on that same tractor, rolled that tractor and killed himself. That tractor killed both the father and the son.

Q: That's amazing. Now, that you mention it I remember hearing that story.

General Howell: That was just awful. That is incredible, that is just terrible.

Q: Imagine what she felt.

General Howell: But, 212 was just a great experience overall. Great guys and a super time.

Q: Yes indeed. How difficult was the transition from the F-4J to the F-4 S? I remember there were some issues and problems.

General Howell: It was going great until we had these terrible leaks in the wings. When they had put those 1,000 pound titanium strap across the belly of the thing to extend the service life, and then they put the leading edge slats, which means they had to reconfigure the spars in the wings. They shaved the spars on the outer parts of the wings and they started leaking fuel like crazy, plus they had metal shavings that they had not cleaned out. They did not clean out those wings like they should have when they shaved them and did all that work, and all that crap was getting caught in fuel filters and everything. It was just a mess. We went out--the birds were beautiful. We loved them. The weapon systems [were great]. We went out and flew them a couple of times and said, "Isn't this great." Then, we started pulling G's and they started leaking like sieves. Fuel was just leaking everywhere. We called in a work team and then they had to peel open the wings on every one of those airplanes, in our hangars, and rework those ribs. That was awful. That took us—that set us back three or four months in our training.

Q: That was right before the deployment, too.

General Howell: Yes, for our next deployment. That just—I was very upset. As a matter of fact, Manfred lectured me about that. I was walking around and I'd go down and see those airplanes, and just get upset, then walk up to the office in a huff. One day, Manfred, and this shows you what a great guy he is, he walks in and slams the door, "SKIPPER! You must stop this!" You know he got into his German [accent???]. He said, "You must stop this! Immediately!" And, I said, "What are you talking about Manfred?" He said, "You're going down on the hangar deck. You're looking at the airplanes. You're getting upset. You're fussing. You're coming back up here with

a long face and everybody in the squadron is upset now. All the troops are fighting each other, everybody thinks that you are mad at everybody.” He said, “You’re the happy one! I’m the one that’s supposed to fuss at people!” He said, “You must be HAPPY! You must smile!!!” So, I said, “I didn’t realize that I was doing it. I’ll knock it off tomorrow.” So, I got back to the smiley face. But, in my heart I felt like hell. But, Manfred taught me a great lesson on leadership, that you’ve got to set the example, even when times are bad—you can’t let them see you sweat. You’ve got to show the happy face.

Q: Chin up, and he was usually pretty happy, too, unless he didn’t to fly.

General Howell: Unless he didn’t get to fly.

Q: I remember the time he threw his beer stein, coffee mug across the ready room because he wasn’t scheduled to fly.

General Howell: He would intimidate people to get another hop. He was awful.

Q: That was the thing in that squadron, getting to fly was all important.

General Howell: There was not one month that I got more [flight] time than him. I never did. I never managed to out fly him, and Spider was always “down hops, down hops.”

Q: Well, that’s where I learned that that was the important thing, is to fly as much as you could. That’s what you are supposed to do, you know?

General Howell: Yes, they were hungry. That was a hungry squadron. Everybody wanted to fly, and it was good. It was healthy. That was good.

Q: Let’s see, at the end of your time there, you got the John Paul Jones Leadership Award.

General Howell: That was a big deal for me. I’ll tell you why—I got—I guess we were getting ready to leave WestPac or had just gotten back from a WestPac, and all of the sudden I get this telegram saying that, ‘The Navy League of the United States has awarded you the John Paul Jones award for inspirational leadership for this year, for all of the Navy and Marines Corps.’ And, I was

just shocked. I was surprised. I found out that General Maloney had put me in for that.

I didn't know anything about it. I think the main reason was because of our family readiness, which had been so good and he had gotten reports on that. As a matter of fact, I remember being called down to Okinawa right before we deployed, back home and briefing him and it seemed like the Commandant came through at that time, Barrow, and he had had me brief the General on what we had done to improve our family readiness. I think that's what that was all about. But, that really had a profound effect on me because they took me to Washington, Janel and me, they paid for a trip to Washington, D.C. to their big convention. They wined and dined us. They had this big award ceremony where I'm up on a stage with a lot of admirals and Generals and treated me like a million dollars. I really sort of felt guilty, I didn't think—it wasn't that I didn't deserve it, it was just that I wondered if there were a lot of other guys that deserved it more than me. I felt like the whole squadron should have been up on that stage. But, I also realized that if people were going to call me an "inspirational leader," then, "maybe I ought to get serious about it." So, from that time on I started to study leadership, and started working formally and personally and seriously at trying to develop my leadership skills. To be more structured about it and really, instead of just saying, "Well this is the way that you do it." I wanted to really study it and figure out how to be a better leader. So, to this day that's become sort of a main theme of my life is to try to improve my leadership skills and, as I've gotten older and been more successful, to help others do theirs too. So, that was a big deal. That was so wonderful. Those people were so—I didn't know anything about the Navy League.

Q: You didn't even know it until you got it?

General Howell: Not at all. No clue, I didn't even know that I had been nominated. So, that was just a big shock and a wonderful thing. And so, that really meant a lot to me. That meant a lot to me.

Q: I noticed also, it seemed like you systematically tried to make an effort in that squadron to develop good camaraderie among the officers, like what you did at Happy Hour and when you're in the club, was part of that.

General Howell: (laughing). Yes.

Q: I remember this thing about...

General Howell: Song practice.

Q: Song practice, how it was important to put on a “class act.” Anybody can be profane or gross, but its important to put on a class act.

General Howell: Yes.

Q: Do you remember that? Was that something that you had deliberately thought about, saw a need for?

General Howell: Well, I realized that as I got a little bit older and wiser. Back before you joined the squadron [pre June 1979] the Brigade commanding General had pulled me aside and said, “Howell, your people are using bad language.” And, I said, “I don’t mind that. They are having fun with it.” And he said, “But it is getting too far, these are not gentlemanly things to do.” So, I took—you know he was right.

Q: Who was the brigade commander then? Do you remember?

General Howell: General Harry Hagaman.

Q: Oh, Hagaman, “Harry the Horse.”

General Howell: Yes, “Harry “the Horse.” So, I took that to heart and I started thinking about that, and I sort of, from that time on I’ve always told guys that, “If you’re really as good as you think you are, then you ought to perform at that level, and people will notice that. You don’t have to tell people how great you are, they’ll see it.” And so, it just became—I just thought that—do you remember that I used to talk about, “Being bush league versus first class?” Well, I figured that it only takes a little bit to go first class. So, we tried to work hard at that.

Q: And, it included stuff that you did at the club and Happy Hour, too. I remember.

General Howell: And so, when we sang songs we wanted to sing in harmony, and when we’d build a pyramid, it had to be a good pyramid. Never, never when there were women around do

anything lewd or crude and treat them well, and that sort of thing. So, that became sort of—I hope—we tried to achieve that.

Q: I picked up on that because you didn't see that, like where I came from, in [VMFA-] 101, where it seemed like anything went in a way; that mentality. But, it seemed like there were sort of boundaries that were established in 212 for that kind of activity. Well anything else on 212?

General Howell: I guess, I'll tell you one more story. I know that we are way over the time with this, but, Bill Frizell, I pulled the "Let your conscious be your guide" thing on him. You know, he was the maintenance officer and...

Q: Yes, I worked for him.

General Howell: We were going to send out one last Cubi det before we went back home, we had about three weeks to go, before we were going to come back. And, he comes in and he says, "Hey, skipper, I haven't been down to Cubi in a long time and Cajun is leading a division down there, and I sure would like to go with him. You know, the good old days, the good old times." I said, "Okay." I said, "Now remind me, you're the maintenance officer aren't you, of the squadron?" He said, "Yes, I am." I said, "Well, how many planes do you have up [mission capable] right now?" And, he said, "Well, we've got eight good ones and two 'comers' and a couple that we're really struggling with." And, I said, "Oh really." I said, "Well, you know that we are getting ready to TransPac back to the United States?" And—or did we fly—I'm trying to remember, well we had to turn them over anyway.

Q: I think we flew commercial back to K-Bay [Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii], that time.

General Howell: We went commercial. Did we come back commercial the first time or the second time? I can't remember.

Q: Well, your second time, was my first time. So that time we flew back commercial, back to Barber's Point.

General Howell: Okay, that's right. We came in on an airliner. Well anyway I think that we were getting ready—well, of course everybody couldn't fly back. But, well whatever the story—when it

comes time, I told him, “These birds have to all be up before we leave, you know that?” And, he said, “Well, yes, sir.” And, I said, “Well, you’re going to down at Cubi for the weekend.” I said, “Is the maintenance team off this weekend?” And, he said, “Oh, no. We’ve got to work hard to get these birds up.” So, I said, “So, you’re going to be down at Cubi, and your maintenance crew is going to be up here working. Is that right?” And, he said, “Well, yes, but I’ve been working hard out there.” And, I said, “I know that you’ve been working hard out there.” I said, “I’ll tell you what, Bill—let your conscious be your guide.” I said, “Go have a great time with Cajun. Just let your conscious be your guide. Go have fun.” And, of course, he didn’t go.

Q: He didn’t go?

General Howell: He didn’t go, and he has never let me forget it. Not ever. Every time that we get together he comes up to me and says, “Let your conscious be your guide (nasty, sarcastically spoken)!!!” (General Howell laughing heartily).

Q: Well, it was amazing, too, out of that squadron that a lot of the officers in that squadron went on to higher...

General Howell: Great success.

Q: Great success in the Marine Corps. I mean you had the Assistant Commandant in the squadron, and then several future colonels, MAG commanders, squadron commanders...

General Howell: Fokker and George [Tullos], both had groups.

Q: Fokker had MAG-31 in the Gulf War.

General Howell: Spider had a group and became the Assistant Commandant. And, of course, we had a lot of squadron [commanders]—Cushing and Driscoll and oh, gee...

Q: [Sidney] “Spit” Mead, he had a MALS [Marine aviation and logistics squadron], I think.

General Howell: Dog Maddocks had a group, not long, but he had a group. Who was the guy who was in his squadron, his F-18 squadron? He had a squadron, too, a bald-headed guy, “Curly.”

Q: Oh, did he?

General Howell: Yes, Barney Fisher, he had a squadron. I'm pretty sure. So, we just had a bunch of leaders. These guys were quality. It's funny, I run into guys who weren't in the squadron and I will mention 212 and they'll all go, "Wow [astonishment and awe in voice]." They always say, "Man, what a group of guys." They say, "Everybody wanted to be in that squadron."

Q: I've heard it called the "Blue Bloods."

General Howell: Is that right? I didn't hear that one.

Q: I've heard it called "The 212 Mafia." The "212 Mafia" was at work.

General Howell: They've heard—oh yes.

Q: Because they thought that it was some sort of conspiracy...

General Howell: (laughing heartily). Oh, you're talking about that "the [212] mafia" got them all promoted and commands?

Q: Oh, yes.

General Howell: There were just quality guys. It's funny, Spider, every chance I got, I wanted Spider close to me, you know?

Q: Yes. You all were teamed up.

General Howell: Yes, he made me look good in a lot of different places. But, I can swear that I never arranged to have him orders anywhere except one time, when I got 2d Marine Aircraft Wing they told me, "We can arrange, General, for you to bring in a bunch of people." I said, "I don't do that." I said, "I'll just take the team that I've got. But, I know—I'll say—but tell me this, what colonels do you have that are ready for orders right now? Just let me take a look at it." And, he was given MATSG [Marine Air Training Support Group] down in [NAS] Pensacola, [Florida]. I

said, “If he wants to come to Cherry Point, I’d like to get him,” because that was just a matter if he was ready to go. And so, I got him and made him my chief of staff, and he just was great. That was the only guy that I ever did that with.

Q: Okay, anything else on 212?

General Howell: No, that was just a defining moment and a wonderful experience.

Q: Then, you were selected for colonel right about that time. I’m showing about November of 1979.

General Howell: No.

Q: No?

General Howell: Not true. I actually was sent to War College from there. I went down to Air War College, and you had asked me about my experience with the Air Force.

Q: Right.

General Howell: It was a good school. It was a 30/30/30. I was still a lieutenant colonel and not up for colonel at that time. It was 30 percent pretty good, 30 percent okay, and 30 percent a waste of time. And, I found out—here’s Howell’s impression of the Air Force from that. The Air Force treats its people as groups, wonderfully; great housing, great clubs, great conditions. They treat their people individually like crap. They treat people like crap, individually.

Q: Is that right?

General Howell: Yes, they do. The reason I say that, they have no respect for their people. They don’t trust their people. For instance, here you have a group of lieutenant colonels and colonels, and when you went to the big “master bedroom,” you know for big lectures and stuff, assigned seating, because they wanted to make sure that they could check and see who was absent, and that kind of stuff.

Q: Is that right? They took roll?

General Howell: With lieutenant colonels and colonels. That really—I raised my hand and I was really upset. And they had this “rated versus non-rated” in the Air Force. Do you know what that is?

Q: Not exactly.

General Howell: The pilots are “rated,” and that’s the special thing. I mean that’s by your name if you’re rated, that puts you in a special category in the Air Force. “Non-rated,” “non-pilots,” they’re different. They are second class. No kidding. And they asked me, “How about in the Marines?” And, I said, “‘Rated’ and ‘not rated’?” I said, “Do you actually call people that.” And, they said, “Well, oh yes. What do you call Marines?” I said, “They are Marines. It doesn’t matter what they are, they are Marines. You know we have Marine aviators and Marine ground people, but they are all Marines.” And, they really —so, in my experience the Air Force has smart, wonderful people. I made good friends there, but as an organization it just doesn’t approach the Marine Corps, and our ethos and our culture, and how we are. It’s just a different—It’s sort of like it’s a big corporation. Very dedicated, very good people, but they really—they look after themselves, and maybe it’s because they have to, I don’t know. It’s really interesting.

Q: Overall, what was the value of the school?

General Howell: But, it was a good experience and I’ll say that we had five Marines in that class, and three out of that five made general officer. That was pretty good. Jim Livingston and Marty Brandtner, and I all made it, and we had two other fellows there. And so, that was pretty good that out of the five Marines in that class, three of us ended up being general officers.

Q: Were you picking up any of the standard Air Force air power dominance theory?

General Howell: It was just ad nauseam.

Q: So, they really hammered it in?

General Howell: Oh, yes and that’s all that exists. The whole world revolves around the United

States Air Force, and they work it hard. It's almost like their trying to sell themselves in a lot of way, to themselves. But, they are believers and they really work it hard, and they work the Congress hard. That's just the Air Force, that's what the Air Force does. But, they were—once more I'll say this, I met some wonderful people, very smart and very gifted people. I loved being a Marine. I'll tell you what, when the Commandant of the Marine Corps came there, I mean you would have—we got all the service chiefs at the War College, and every one of them to a man, except for the Commandant of the Marine Corps, would stand at the head of this—they had this beautiful auditorium with this big stage and very impressive lectern, with all the devices. And, these guys would all come in their dress uniforms, with everything [awards, badges, pins, medals???]—all their shit on their chest, and have these PowerPoint shows, of course we didn't have PowerPoint then, but big color slide shows talking about their services and they'd rattle on and on behind the lectern. (laughing)—The Commandant of the Marine Corps comes, General Barrow, and he's got on his “wooly-pully” [OD wool sweater]. He walks out, he tells the young lady, ‘I don't need that,’ and (hands clap together once to emphasis the suddenness of the Commandant's actions)—he comes out in the audience, stands, and walks up and down the aisle, talking to everybody. He says, ‘You know—how much do you men and women study about war here, and fighting?’ (No response from audience). He said, ‘Isn't this called the War College, isn't this the Air Force War College? The Air War College?’ (No response from audience). He said, ‘But, how much time do you spend talking about war, and fighting?’ (No response from audience). He said, ‘Isn't that what you are supposed to be doing? I think that's what you ought to be doing.’ I mean he got people fired up. After he left, everyone—I mean there was a standing applause. And these Air Force guys came up to me and said, “God, man I wish we had some leaders like that in the Air Force.” I mean, it really made a difference. That was really good stuff.

Q: You were an honor graduate out of there; “Absolutely superior performer,” your paper was a first runner-up in Commandant's Award.

General Howell: Yes (laughing).

Q: What did you write your paper on, sir?

General Howell: On leadership.

Q: Did you? You were thinking about leadership. Was that because of the John Paul Jones

Award?

General Howell: I was really was. That made an impression. I took the old “Principles of Leadership” out of FM 22-100 and listed them, and then tried to apply personal experiences that I observed, or had been a part of, both pro and con against those principles, and how the principles affected those things. I just gave examples. That was what my paper was. And, to this day when I talk about leadership I use a lot of those examples to this day, when I talk to crowds, being tactically proficient, talking about how great 542 was because we had a skipper who was great and then what happened when we got somebody who wasn’t proficient, technically proficient. Giving those examples against the principles, and show, “This principles really work. They really work if you try to apply them, and if you don’t apply them things go bad.”

Q: There’s a science to it?

General Howell: Yes. Well, I think it’s an art. I think it’s an art, but you can learn. Like a science you can learn it. Anybody can learn to be a very effective leader, and those principles, in my book, I don’t care how high low or what organization you are in—those apply. And if you try to use them to good effect, you can develop good leadership skills. That’s my theory, that’s the way that I see it. That’s what I’m going to be doing at the University of Texas. That’s what I wrote that paper on. It wasn’t that good of a paper, but, I wrote what I believed in.

Q: Yes, well that’s something that comes to mind, how does leadership change, when you think about a second lieutenant or a first lieutenant and what their doing in the Marine Corps, does leadership change as you rise in rank? In The Basic School you’re always taught to respond, “what now lieutenant?”—do something.

General Howell: Yes. I think that personal one-on-one leadership is never different, no matter where you go. But, when you get more responsibility as a leader, you have to—your scope changes and I think that vision becomes very important as you become more senior. A senior leader has to have a vision and goals. As a junior leader, you are given your goals, and you have to achieve the goals that are assigned to you using your leadership skills. As you get higher you are the one who shapes and forms the goals, and then at an even higher level then you actually have to come up with a vision, to apply goals against, to come up with tactics to get there. So, you have to develop sort of a bigger picture, a visionary—but when you are trying to get your own staff to find

your vision you use the same leadership principles you did as a second lieutenant. I'm not kidding. I'm convinced of that. I read some books where people think that there are different categories of leadership and different...I don't believe it. Of course, no one has ever accused me of being brilliant, but I really believe that the same basic principles, the "eternal truths," apply at all levels. I really believe that.

Q: Okay, Sir. From the Air War College you get to go to Washington.

General Howell: Yes, afterwards.

Q: Were you looking forward to that and how did you get that assignment?

General Howell: No, I wasn't [looking forward to it]. I got a call from my monitor saying, "You're going, we've got you coming to Headquarters and you're going to be in Manpower, running a monitors' section. It's very important. It is a key billet and with your background, you are the only guy that can do it." Well, I had my buddy, John Ditto, who had been over in WestPac, he was down at 2d Marine Aircraft Wing and was the G-3, and was going to get a group. I called him and I said, and General Maloney was down there, I said, "Man, I sure would like to keep flying jets, is there anything that I can do?" I said, "I'll be a staff officer. I'll be the special services officer on the wing staff if they'll let me keep flying airplanes down there. Can you help me out?" So, about two days later he calls me back and he said, "I talked to General Maloney and he said, 'If Beak really wants to come down here—we can find a job for him and he can keep flying airplanes.'" So, I said, "Thanks." And so, about two days later my monitor calls and he is upset. He said, "What the hell is going on? We got a call from 2d MAW and they said, that they want you down there; and that they want us to assign you to them." And, he said, "God dang it! I told you that this job is the most important job in Manpower and you're the only guy that can do it. You've got—we need you up here and you've never been to Headquarters." I said, "Well, I don't know what's going, sir. But, whatever is right, whatever ya'll want to do." He said, "What!?!? Dag-gone it! We're looking into this, of course General Maloney is a very powerful man, but dog-gone it—this is screwing up my plan." I said, "Well, whatever is right. I don't know what's going on, but whatever is right." And so, I'm laughing too. I'm giggling saying, "I'm going to get out of this thing and I'm going to go fly." And, about three days later I get another call from John Ditto, he said, "Beak, there's been a turn of events." He said, "Manpower had a long talk with General Maloney and General Maloney came to me and said, 'Beak has never been to Headquarters Marine

Corps?” And then he asked me, he said, “Is that true?” And, I said, “Yes, sir. It is. I’ve never been there.” So, he said, “Well, General Maloney told me to tell you, that if you’ve never been there then he considers you to be a limited duty officer, and that it’s your turn.” He said, “And he [General Maloney] said, “that he doesn’t want a limited duty officer on his staff at 2d MAW.” And so, I said, “Aye-aye, Sir.” So...

Q: There you go.

General Howell: The final thing of that is clear: I’m going to Washington. But, about two weeks later—well about a month before we are actually going to go, I get a call from the monitor who said, “Hey, we are trying to figure out where we are going to put you.” I said, “Well, you told me that I had this very important job that only I could fill.” He said, “Well, that’s true, but the Assistant Commandant, General Kelley, just had a five percent reduction at Headquarters staff and that billet was eliminated.” (laughing and clapping hands).

Q: (laughing). It was that important!

General Howell: I said, “It was really important, wasn’t it.” (laughing). He said, “Well, we didn’t really want that to happen but it happened. But, we are going to find a place for you.” And, low and behold, unbeknownst to me, Phil Kruse, who was up at Headquarters in the Aviation Department saw my name on a list and said, “Hey, we want this guy.” And so, he arranged for me to come to APP, Aviation Plans and Programs.

Q: Was he running at APP then?

General Howell: No, he was APP-1. They had APP, who was a colonel, Phil was still a lieutenant colonel, and I think he’d been selected for colonel. He was APP-1, which was plans, and APP-2 was Programs. So, I got assigned to APP-2. I was programs...

Q: Who was running APP, Jack Dailey wasn’t it?

General Howell: Well, he became the—before him we had [Eugene] Russell, and he made brigadier General and left, Dailey came in. He had had an air group at El Toro. That was the first time that I met him. I don’t know if I can properly explain, you want to say charisma or just an

incredible person. Dailey was just like a bright light, lighting up the room. I mean the guy was just wonderful, and just you would immediately—you just can't believe [and] it's too good to be true, and then he is. He's just better than you think he is, and he was just a great leader. He was fun, smart, gave great guidance. You would go in there, and I'm trying to learn my way in there, and of course he had worked there before—a couple of times. He knew it like the back of his hand. He had had my job sometime before, and I'd go in with these point papers and he'd take a look at them. Instead of chewing my ass out, he'd say, "Well, let's talk. This is a good start, but why don't we think about this, and maybe put this here—and move this over here—and I don't know if we really need that. Do you think we really need that one?" And, I'd say, "Well, probably not, sir." And, he'd say, "Well, I think that you're right." And, he'd sort of re-write it for me. He'd say, "Go work that and bring it back, and let's see how it looks then." And, he'd always make you feel like you had done it even though he had done it, but you'd learn. You'd learn how to do it. The guy was just—that's was his way. He made you feel good. I think he believed in me, and it wasn't long—I'd only been working for him for a couple of months there and we had General [William] White, I think that was our DCS [Deputy Chief of Staff] for Aviation. Then the bald-headed guy was the deputy, who later got the wing out at El Toro, he just died recently. What was his name. He was a Cobra guy, a helicopter guy. That's terrible that I can't even remember his name. APP and APW [Aviation Requirements] were the big dogs. The two colonels that were running those two offices. They did everything for DCS Aviation. APW was all the planes and weapons. Then, APP was plans and programs, basically. Those were the big powerhouses. You worked your butt off, but you were right in the middle of it.

Q: Okay, plans and programs, was the money part of it wasn't it?

General Howell: Oh, yes. In Washington, that's everything. In aviation, the aviation budget was more than anybody, even more than our blue dollars [Navy Department funding for Marine aviation]. Our blue dollars were more than our green dollars [Navy Department funding for the Marine Corps], and so that was a powerhouse.

Q: General [William] Fitch came in sometime there.

General Howell: Fitch came in, and Fitch had his stuff together. He went to the Navy, assessed what was going on over there. He had been there before, too. He and Dailey talked to each other, and Dailey comes in one day and says, "Howell, we've got a job for you. General Fitch is going to

have you assigned to OP-501, which is the Navy Aviation Budget under Air Warfare, and they have never had a Marine in there. He went and talked to Admiral McDonald, who is the Air Warfare Assistant CNO. He is the Assistant CNO for Air Warfare.” He said, “They have agreed to allow us to put a Marine officer in there and you are it. The reason that we are putting you in there is that you are our spy. Your duty is to see everything, where the money is going over there, and then to go up and down the hallway, to every office, and check on everything-everyday and report back to me, and tell me what is going on.”

Q: This is from Dailey (laughing)?

General Howell: Well, yes (laughing), and I was the Marine “spy.” And, oh by the way, I check in there with Admiral McDonald, who was a wonderful guy, and he said, “Well, LtCol Howell. I understand that you are the Marine spy.” And, I said, “Yes, sir.” He said, “Okay, you can come in here anytime that you want to, in any meeting, anything you need, you are welcome.” I said, “Thank you. Thank you, sir.” And so, I walked out and I go down, and I go to OP-501, which was, I think Captain Dick Gentz, who later became Admiral Gentz, he was OP-501. And, I walk in there and he was an old COD [carrier on-board delivery, probably flying a C-2 “Greyhound”], but he was smart, and tough. He knew money. He looks at me and he says, “I can’t believe they’re doing this. I’ll tell you what—so your General Fitch doesn’t trust me, or doesn’t trust us with his money, I’ll tell you what we are going to do—.” He had his office, and then next door was sort of a double room filled with file cases, and locked security cabinets—just full of stuff—and divided with about five or six people in there. That’s where all of his people worked. He said, “We’re going to put your desk right there by mine. You will sit there, and you can observe everything that goes on in here, and you can watch what I do. If you have any questions, you can ask me questions as they come in.” I said, “Thank you. Yes, sir.” And, I’m thinking, “Oh shit, this is going to be awful.”

Q: Now, he was a captain, a Navy captain?

General Howell: Yes, and later was a three-star. He had Navy Systems Command, isn’t it? Navy Aviation Systems Command, I think. They were over in Crystal City. He got screwed—he got mixed up in that A-12 debacle, and took the blame for that, and actually had to leave. He lost his job. He would have been a four-star easy. But, he’s a good guy. He was a great man. But, he just took the hit for the A-12, when it wasn’t his fault. But, that’s the way it goes. So, I go in there,

and all these guys—so here's this Marine with all these Navy guys, and I'm working with these guys. And, after awhile they just sort of forget that I'm there. Actually, I go in and I start helping them. I say, "Hey what are you doing? Can I help you with that?" And, I find out that most Navy aviation guys that are at the Pentagon, that's their shore duty. You know, those guys are out on carriers all the time. They fly, they fly, they're never home. So, when those guys come to the Pentagon, they take they're pack off. They don't want to do anything. So, if someone goes in and says, "Hey, I'll do that for you." Man, they will let you. I ended up doing a lot of stuff, and running the numbers for them. And, when it came down to those 12th hour [decisions] where "We've got an extra 100,000 or million here, man I knew exactly where to put that money. It usually end up with Marines. I'd always make sure that there was a Navy program that got some, but I'd always give some of it over to the Marine things. It was interesting.

Q: So, you really didn't have any duties, except just watch what they were doing?

General Howell: Just watch what was going on and help out, and report back to Jack Dailey.

Q: Did you report back to Fitch, or General Dailey?

General Howell: To General Dailey, but periodically he'd call me up and say, "Get over here." And, I have to go and see General Fitch, and he'd say, "What the hell are they doing with this?" Then, I'd have to explain, "Well, sir—let me tell you—." So, that was—we developed—and Fitch said, more than once, "Howell, if you screw this up you're going to Keflavik. I'm assigning you to Keflavik, the Marine detail at Keflavik, Iceland." (laughing). That was always his threat. And so, I do that, and then low and behold, I get picked up for colonel. Just by coincidence there is a billet over in OP-05, Air Warfare, that is the Senior Marine liaison to OP-05. That had always been a Marine billet for colonels, and that was usually a senior Marine's twilight tour [last assignment], for an aviator, to see his time out of the Marine Corps. And, the guy who was there was leaving. He was retiring, and so, I asked, told Dailey, "Hey, I've got another year that I'm here—I know that I'm junior, but how about giving me that billet. I think that I can really help in this office." He said, 'Hell—. So, he talked to Fitch, so they assigned me OP-50M, they called it, which is the Marine aviation liaison for OP-05. Instead of being the unheralded spy, I became the official spy. Instead of it being a retirement job, I got into it. And, then McDonald—and then his replacement, Vice Admiral 'Dutch' Schultz. He became OP-05, I'd walk in his office, they'd have all the admirals in to talk about F-14's, and plotting. The F-14 was a money hog, and they hid more

money lines that didn't say F-14 on them, that were going to [Northrup] Grumman, and the F-14. The F-14 costs much more than anybody knows that it costs. They loved it. It ran OP-05. OP-05 was the F-14.

Q: So, the fighter pilots were controlling that...

General Howell: You got it, and they just siphoned money out of everything. When the Marines got screwed out of money it went to the F-14, I can guarantee you. And so, I'd walk into these meetings on the F-14, and they'd look at me and say, "Beak what the hell are you doing in here? The Marine Corps doesn't have any F-14s." I'd say, "Sir, I'm just here to help. I just want to listen in, and if I can help in any way—." And he knew that McDonald had said, "You can come to anything that you want to, and he'd just go—'alright, sit down!' And, I'd just sit there and listen. But, I got to know a lot of stuff, and I reported back. And, in the interim, then came up, finally my three years are up and it's time--they did not have boards then, for command or anything, but they had started, and the commands were opening up. It was entertained for me to get MAG-15, over in Iwakuni; that was an option. I talked to the monitor, I said, "Well, I've never turned down orders. I don't think I have that right, but I think that's just a one-year to a two-year deal, and I would like to go to someplace where maybe I can get command longer, if that's possibly." And, low and behold, MAG-24 came up.

Q: And, you still wanted to go back to Hawaii? Why was that?

General Howell: I really loved Hawaii and it didn't hurt me at all. By that time F-18s were coming in. Hawaii was going to be the last stronghold of the F-4. I said, "Hey, I'm an F-4 guy. I'd like to get in the F-18, but I'm comfortable in that airplane. I don't mind flying it. I love that airplane, and I think that I can help. I know it well." And so, I went out; I got out to MAG-24, and Duane Wills was cut short because they gave him the Marine Amphibious Brigade to take out on a WestPac tour. So, that's how I ended up there, and we had a change of command and took Duane's place. He later, a year later, came back and became the chief of staff of FMFPac. We got to really be good friends.

Q: I've heard great things about him.

General Howell: Oh, he was a great guy. I don't know if you had heard, he was very sick?

Q: I've heard he is.

General Howell: He's got a degenerate brain disease, that's destroying his brain. Everybody thought that he had Alzheimer's, but it's not. But, his brain is just basically crumbling. Mrs. Wills finally had to put him in a home.

Q: I had a couple of questions just about the money issue up at Headquarters.

General Howell: Yes.

Q: The Harrier, I noticed that was one of the programs that you were working on, getting the AV-8B in. Is that correct?

General Howell: Yes.

Q: Any comments in that regard? Any battles that were fought, that you recall, for the Harrier?

General Howell: Well, as a part of my job, the Marine Corps wanted to upgrade the Harrier to get the [AV-8] B, and to take care of a lot of the problems that they'd had with the [AV-8] A. They designed this critical wing and beefed up the engine, and said, 'We're going to have more thrust in this thing, and it'll have more capability.' Frankly, I've got to say right up front that I'm not a fan of the Harrier. To me, just looking at its performance, you know we had Harriers out in Iwakuni, when I was out there with 212. We TransPac'd with them, and I was a little skeptical. I've always thought that the Marine Corps oversold the Harrier to itself, first; then started believing things that really weren't true. And, then they oversold it to the rest of the world. Yet, here I was working for a—there were powerful forces at HQMC that thought it was critical to the Marine Corps to have the Harrier, and a lot of non-aviators felt that way, because a lot of people a lot smarter with me, with better visions, saw the day when the Navy would try to take away all the TacAir away from the Marines and put it on ships. And, if we had a unique airplane that they didn't want, then we could hold on to our TacAir.

Q: That's interesting.

General Howell: So, I had never considered that all that much. But the thing that troubled me more than anything about the Harrier: one, we oversold it and it wasn't as good as we said it was; it never had the performance nor the capability that we all said it had, and that the Harrier guys claim. That's just—it's a fine airplane and it does great things in its own limits, but it's limited—and they were always trying to sell it as more than it really is. That really bothered me, whereas the F-18 that we were bringing in was very capable, and the Navy was fighting that at that time, they wanted a new version of the A-7 instead of the F-18. They loved the A-7. The A-7 was a great bird, and they loved the legs on it. The A-7 could go forever.

Q: Fuel is everything to the Navy.

General Howell: It is. It really is.

Q: That's why they liked the F-14, too, wasn't it?

General Howell: Yes, you're right. They could go out there and go a long way. And that was very important to them, and the A-7 had a good bombing system, too. The A-7 guys were good. They could really, I mean they'd get "shacks" [a bulls eye bomb hit] every other drop. They were good at what they did. And so, they loved the A-7, and they had the F-14, so they said, 'Why do we need a Hornet. Why do we need that?' And so, they fought that tooth and nail.

Q: This is going on while you are up there, in APP?

General Howell: Yes, yes. It was just a battle royal. In the Marine Corps there were a lot of politics involved, and I think that Northrop, along with McDonnell-Douglas, with their influence and Congress, and the Marines needed an F-4 replacement. You know, and General Wilson had turned down the F-14, and so we got the F-18. That was way against all of the Navy's wishes, and they kept telling us, 'You've already got the Harrier, it's unique. Now, how are you going to pay for the F-18?' The reason that the Marines could get airplanes was because the Navy wanted those airplanes, and that's the reason that we had the F-4s. It was because the Navy had F-4s. So, the minute you break away from them, they say, 'You've got to use "green money" for that, because that's Marine unique.' Our helicopters had always been Marine unique, and so the Harrier, and all that money going to the Harrier had really robbed the helicopter program of a lot of upgrades and new airplanes. That's why we got stuck with the [CH-] 46, for as long as we had it. The single-

rotor Cobras because we never really got the upgrades on those, we should have had, when we should of got them because all of the money was going to the Harrier. But, we got the F-18 with just really earmarks, and the Congress. And, then lo and behold, the Navy decides not to go with a new A-7 and they start going to F-18. They were really cajoled into that, by a lot of people, Congress and others. And, it's the best thing that ever happened to the Navy. They'll never admit it, but that's a wonderful airplane. It's done great service for the Navy. They love it now. They understand it.

Q: They're even going to continue with the E,F and G-- the electronic version.

General Howell: Yes, but all that was going on. I was lucky because while I was there—I'm trying to think—it was [the] Reagan [Administration] and we were expanding the DOD, and we were getting more money. So, it was easy, being in APP when money is coming in, it good. It's always a zero-sum game, but if the sum is expanding a little bit it really helps, everybody gets a piece of the pie. So, I've got to admit that circumstances helped in that regard.

Q: The thing you hear from Harrier guys, is that it was always under-funded and that's why they had problems. How much of that do you...

General Howell: That's bullshit! That's the thing, if they would have had more money they could have got a lot more things, but did they really deserve it? Was the airplane really worth that investment? You know, you keep putting bells [and whistles on that thing]—that airplane, right now as we speak is being grounded because that motor is crapping out on it again. They are going through another "red-stripe" [terminology for grounding an entire fleet of aircraft for a mechanical malfunction].

Q: Another "red stripe," now?

General Howell: You've got it. It's that same engine that they modified, and beefed up, for the [AV-8] B. You know, that engine was never designed to put out the thrust that it puts out. It was designed for the [AV-8] A, and the size and the weight of the [AV-8] A. And, they put all that other crap on it, with the FLIR, lasers, and track-finder, and all that stuff. So, they had to beef up the motor and it's the same motor. The motor has vibration in it, and things, that crack it and fatigue it, and fail. Rolls-Royce keeps promising and saying, 'Oh, we fixed now. We've got it.'

Well, no, they don't and they haven't. Rolls-Royce is just trying to help the Marines satisfy the Marine Corps, and they make money. But, that motor could never live up to what was expected of it, with the added thrust and everything. To this day, it's the Achilles heel of that aircraft. We've killed a lot of fine people because of that. That's bothers me. When I was a wing commander at 2nd MAW, my accident rate would have been perfect, zero, if it had not been for the Harrier. The Harrier would just keep falling out of the sky; engines crapping on them. So...

Q: We'll talk about that, too, sir, when we get into your time as 2d MAW.

General Howell: We'll talk about that, too. But, the experience, let me sum up my experience at Headquarters by saying that it was an incredible experience. I didn't want to be there, but I ended up learning so much about the leadership of the Marine Corps, Naval Aviation, and DOD. I found out that Headquarters Marine Corps was filled with a bunch of guys just like me: they didn't want to be there, but were doing their very best to help the Marine Corps get the wherewithal to go fight. I found out too, that a lot of people you have to depend on in other offices don't work for you, and you have to learn to get along and to "scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," and help each other, and seek assistance, and learn to deal with the infantry guys that don't really like aviators. But, we help each other out and try to make them understand what we are trying to do to help. So, you really learn how to be [diplomatic] and how to work with other people, and get people to help you, that don't need to help you. You've got to figure that out. So, it was a great learning experience. I learned from some great people: Fitch, Dailey, and a bunch of people from up and down that hallway were just really superb leaders. "Monk" Monroe and...

Q: Oh, J.P.?

General Howell: J.P. had APW. Yes, and so I mean they had a great team. And the guys in APP, you know we had Fred McCorkle, Pete Kranker, in APP. God, I'm trying to think of some other guys. I see them in my mind, but I can't think of any of their names.

Q: Was it eye-opening, I guess it was, the relationship when it comes to money and acquisitions between the Marine Corps and the Navy?

General Howell: It sure was, and I realized how it was a war. The Marine Corps had to fight for every penny that we got.

Q: At the same time, would you say that Marine aviation is in the middle between the Navy and the ground Marine Corps, in a sense? Was there any of that?

General Howell: No, the guys--the senior leadership of the Marine Corps understood how important Marine TacAir was to it.

Q: They were on board.

General Howell: Totally.

Q: General Barrow?

General Howell: Yes, and General [P.X.] Kelley. And, the R & P guys, Requirements and Programs, they understood it. General Tom Morgan was the R & P. I had to go and brief him all of the time. He was a wonderful man. He was very serious and a very detailed guy, but just a wonderful person. He understood. He really appreciated Marine aviation. So, the senior leadership made all the underlings, who didn't like flight pay, he told them, 'You'd better get on-board--this is important.' So, the Marine Corps was together. I did not sense any animosity. Now, there was—Manpower was—there was always--really it was personnel, where there was a rub with aviation, because aviation got all the best and brightest of the young enlisted; when they would pass their tests while coming in, so we didn't have half of the disciplinary problems, because we had smarter kids. So, there was always a rub there that—all those guys would say, 'You know, you guys don't deserve to get all these great guys. Life would be a lot easier in the grunts if we had some of these people, too. [And, my response would always be], "Yes, you're right, but we get the studs." So, that was just like flight pay, which just really pissed them off. But, they realized—the guys that were important, like the decision-makers, understood the importance of Marine aviation.

Q: So, you got orders back to Hawaii?

General Howell: Yes.

Q: Was the family happy about that?

General Howell: Sort of, but not my son. We were living in Fairfax, Virginia, and my son was going to Woodson High School. He had a lot of potential as a soccer player, and that summer that I was going back [to Hawaii] was going to be the summer before his senior year of high school, and he was very concerned about losing the opportunity to get a college scholarship and we were, too. Because of the potential there, and what have you, we had a family session and we decided together that the best thing would be for mom, and son, and daughter to stay in Fairfax that year, and for me to go unaccompanied for a year out there; and then mom and daughter would join me after he graduated from high school. So, that's what we did and that was for a year.

So I was a "geographic bachelor" that first year, living out in the BOQ. They stayed in Fairfax. We had to move houses though, because the house that we were in, the lease ran out and the people were coming back. So, we had to move them into another house across the hill, in the same area, and get them going. I missed out on his senior year, which really hurt, but the guy was—you love watching your son play sports and experiencing all that, and I didn't get to see much of that at all. I'd get back periodically, but not very much. So I went out, but the command, we knew that it was a once in a lifetime chance, and I just didn't think that I could turn it down. So, I got the command, and Janel came out for the change of command with the group, and then she went back. I went to work.

Janel: The General had to give us permission, remember?

General Howell: Oh, that's right, because my wife wasn't going to be there. I had to get permission from the commanding General to be there without my wife for a year.

Q: O.K. Steele?

General Howell: Yes, and he approved it. Steele had the [First Marine] Brigade. FMFPac was across the island. You know, the Brigade is in Kaneohe and FMFPac is at Camp Smith, on the other side of the Island. At the time that was General Gray, D'wayne Gray, An artilleryman and a University of Texas graduate.

Q: I think he lives up around Virginia now.

General Howell: That's where he lives. I saw him about two years ago. He came down to—he went to ROTC at the University of Texas. They had a reunion and he came. It was good to see

him, but he was FMFPac. So, O.K. Steele is the General and I've got the group [MAG-24], and it was just a wonderful experience.

Q: What kind of shape was the group in, at that time?

General Howell: It was in good shape. The thing is, the active Marine Corps was weaning away from the F-4, and they were setting up for, and transitioning to, the F-18; both on the East and West coast. Even though they still had some Phantoms left, they were going to the F-18. And so, the enlisted personnel, F-4 qualified people, who were awaiting in the queue, to go into schools, a lot of them got out to Hawaii and the F-4s. Parts, all the stockpiles of parts, we went out and searched, and got them. We ended up, I had a group maintenance officer, Major Don Schwartz, who was the greatest maintenance officer that ever walked on this earth. I got those guys together. He already had a good operation going, but when I got my group staff together. After the change of command, I got everybody together and said, "Here is Howell's philosophy and my guidance—." The squadrons were in the UDP. We had three F-4 squadrons, one of them always in Japan. We had three [CH-] 46 squadrons, one of them always deployed with an amphibious force. Then, we stood up a fourth squadron while I was there. Then, we had a Det of TA-4s, and the H&MS. And, we had one combined [CH-] 53/Huey squadron, which would provide aircraft to go on these amphibious Dets, with the "onesies" and "twosies", that would go. [CH-] 53s, I don't think they went out, but the Hueys did. So, we had all of those people there, and then we had a MABS, Marine Air Base Squadron and a MACS--Marine Air Control Squadron.

Q: A MACS [Marine air control squadron]?

General Howell: We had a MACS squadron. We had it all. It was just a great outfit.

Q: That's a very unique organization.

General Howell: Oh, it was. I told our people, "From my experience as a squadron commander, I have total faith that the squadron [commander]—under—and their commands, know what they need to do, to get ready and train for combat; and do what's necessary. So, we're going to assist them. We're not going to tell them what to do. We are going to help them do what they need to do. We are going to approve what they say they want to do, but it's going to be their initiative and what they want to do to get ready for combat. I'm going to give them guidance. I want them to be

ready for combat, but then we're going to support—our job is to provide for them, and not shove stuff down their throat. We're going to try and take all the weight off them that we can." I told them, I said, "Literally, our purpose is to treat them like spoiled children. We want to give them, everything we can. Everything that they ask for, we will do our best to provide. I want you to spoil them, and it's going to be galling to you, at times, because spoiled children act spoiled." But, I said, "That's the way I want you to be. If we spoil them, and they act spoiled, then you have done your job and I'll be happy, and we will do well. That's the attitude that I want from this group."

Don Schwartz came to me after that meeting, and he said, 'Colonel, that was music to my ears; I've been waiting for somebody to say that, because I've got the group maintenance organization ready to do just what you want to do.' And, he said, 'We will do it.' So, we started an operation going on that within six months, we basically had such a great maintenance organization, and support, going that I got the squadron commanders together, and with Schwartz, I said, "I'm going to lean on you, but I'm going to help you as I lean on you. You will only be allowed to have one down aircraft everyday. If you have more than one down aircraft, we are going to send a team down to fix the other one. So, I expect you to have 11 of your 12 aircraft up and fully capable everyday. I won't hold it against you, if you don't. It's just that if you don't we will send an extra team down to fix that airplane for you." We actually had "tiger teams," a "helicopter tiger team" and an "F-4 tiger team." Their only purpose was, if a squadron got in trouble and had more than one aircraft down then they went down and went to work on it. It sort of galled--the squadrons didn't like that. But, man we got the aircraft up, and they were flying, and they were up and up [full mission capable—FMC]. It was interesting, our reporting started going in everyday—I had 115 aircraft in that group, it was amazing. Of course, some of them are deployed, two squadrons are deployed, so it was at least two dozen that were not there.

Q: So, they were part of the 1st Wing when they do that, right?

General Howell: Or out with fleet. They don't report through me. But, so generally, on board and in the group, I usually had about 75 to 85 aircraft there. It was typical for us to have, on a daily basis, 74 to 78 aircraft full mission capable, up, everyday. And we reported it. It was funny, at that time, General Dwayne Gray wasn't the CG yet. We had initially, General [Charlie] Cooper, was FMFPac, and he was very supportive. He was an interesting guy, a real character. But, he supported me well, particularly when we had to move over to Barbers for awhile, while they worked on the runway.

I needed—we went over there and they just did not have facilities for us. So, I went and

told him that I wanted to rent some trailers to set up our maintenance effort, in some trailer houses. His staff just went bonkers. They thought it was a waste of money and said, 'You don't need to do that. They can live in tents,' and all of that. So, I brought General Cooper over to K-Bay and I gave him a briefing of what we were going to move. I said, "Sir, let me give you the bottom line value of these assets—." And, it was over a billion dollars. He couldn't believe it. He just went, 'WHAT!?! A billion dollars?' I said, "Sir, that is the value of what we are moving over to Barbers Point. I think that we ought to have the right facilities to support that operation." He said, 'You've got it.' So, he backed us up. He supported us. We had a good deployment over there.

Q: While they were working on the runway?

General Howell: Yes, while they were working on the runway. But, by the time that he leaves, and Gray comes in—when Gray checks in-- in those days FMFPac worked for CINCPacFleet. FMFPac was under CINCPacFleet, they weren't directly under CINCPac. They were not a component command yet. They were just a subordinate command under CINCPacFleet. He reports to his boss, who was Admiral [Sylvester Robert] Foley. Foley gives him a command brief, as General Gray is the new three-star under him, and Foley gave him a command brief. He's giving the brief, and they're going through the readiness of the different air wings and the different carrier groups, and then they get to MAG-24, whose readiness numbers far exceed everyone else's, and they report—the readiness report, their readiness and he said, 'Oh by the way, my guys tell me don't trust those numbers.' Nobody is that good, there is something—we think that they are gun-decking their books, and making themselves look good. They are not that good.' Gray, said, 'Well, you're telling me that I have a group commander who is lying on his reports?' And Foley said, 'Well, I don't know if he is lying, but we just don't think that they are that good.' Gray said, 'Admiral, I will find out.' The next day, we get a message, and of course, I don't know anything about this, but [John] Dailey does. By this time, this is the next year, Dailey is the Brigade commanding general. I get a message, and a phone call, almost simultaneously at seven o'clock in the morning. Thank God that I'm at work already, and he says, 'Within the next twenty-four hours you are directed to fly every aircraft that you are reporting 'up,' on your morning report this morning.' I think we had something like seventy-seven aircraft reported up. I thought, "Well, that's strange." And, I said, "Okay." So, I call the squadron commanders and I said, "You've got a problem with this?" And, most of them said, 'Well, do we have to fly them all this morning?' And, I said, "If you could fly all your up aircraft in your regular flight schedule, then go ahead and do that." And, I had one squadron that was standing down. They were having a safety day, and

they weren't going to fly, but I said, "You've got to fly (apologetic tone in voice)." So, they reboot and they're going to fly. I told them, "We've got to do that." So, we got it organized and they are going to fly, and low and behold I start getting calls from the Brigade saying, 'How ya'll doing? How ya'll doing [asked robotically, anxiously]?' Dailey calls up, and says, 'How's it going, Beak?' I said, "Sir, we are doing fine." I told him the guidance that I had given everybody, and he said, 'Well, you're going to get it done, right? And, I said, "Yes, sir. We're going to get it done." And, he said, 'Well that's good. That's good.' I didn't realize the significance of all this until...

Q: (laughing). He hadn't told you?

General Howell: I didn't realize that my job was in jeopardy. You know, that afternoon, [William "Spider"] Nyland, by this time, he had been my Three [Operations]. This was a year later, the second year of my command, he's got [VMFA-] 232. He calls, and he's really down, he said, 'We've had a massive hydraulic failures on one of my F-4's. We are trying to get it fixed, but it doesn't look like we are going to make it. But, we have another bird that was down, that we got fixed, so we are going to fly it.' And I said, "Go ahead and just fly it, too. We'll just work it out. We can't expect everything to go well." So, at the end of the day, when it's done, we had one bird that went down solid, and we couldn't get it back up. But, we had two birds that been reported down that we had fixed. So, we reported seventy-seven and we flew seventy-eight. And so, we turned that in.

Q: And they did everything that they were supposed to do, the radars were working and everything?

General Howell: Yes, they flew the regular training schedule. So, that evening—Dailey calls me and he said, 'Meet me at the club.' And so, I get to the club and he buys me a drink and says, 'Let me tell you the story behind the story.' My hands started shaking because I didn't realize my job was on the line (laughing). He said, 'I cannot tell you how ecstatic General Gray is at this moment, that you proved that you had those birds up.' I'll tell you one thing about Foley that was first class, the next day I got a message and it info'd the world, he said, (I wish I had it in my hand), but it basically said, 'I made the statement that your record keeping was erroneous, on your readiness of your aircraft, I want to apologize. You've proven that your not, and I want to give you a formal apology from saying that.'

Q: Wow.

General Howell: So, that was pretty slick.

Q: I saw that message in your “jacket” [OQR-officers qualification record].

General Howell: Really? Maybe Dailey put it in there. I don’t know. But, that was a great moment in sports. That shows you, and that was Don Schwartz—and that was our squadron commanders. It wasn’t Jeff Howell, but it was just—that group really had it together. It was a thing of joy on a daily basis, being there and flying there. Of course, the year that Janel wasn’t there, that was a bummer, but at the same time some things happened and maybe it was just as well that she wasn’t there. I had an accident. I was in an accident in a Huey.

Q: Oh, were you? What happened?

General Howell: Yes. Well, I had fam’d—part of the deal to going to MAG-24 is—since we were going to have helicopters, I got to go through Pensacola on the way and get a “hover familiarization” to learn how to fly helicopters. So, when I got out there I was flying F-4’s every week, but I’d always go around and fly with a helicopter squadron each week, too; either a [CH-] 46, or a [CH-] 53, or a Huey. I was trying to learn how to fly the Huey, and Ed Langston, was the commanding officer of HMH 463, one of the squadrons; he had the combined Huey/[CH-] 53 squadron. He was Fam-ing me in the Huey. We had flown locally, a couple of hops, and we’d gone over to the Big Island. We had some helicopters supporting the ground troops up in the Pohakuloa Training Area, and we had flown over there to observe the training. We had flown a night vision goggle mission in a Huey over there. We were going to stay over there for a couple of days, but then there was a change of command that I had to go to back to Main side [MCAS Kaneohe]. I think one of the infantry battalions was having a CoC [Change of Command], and I needed to be there. So, we flew back in the Huey on Thursday. We attended the COC and then we were on our way back over, the next day, to the Big Island. I’m flying this thing, I’m doing pretty good. We’re at 15 hundred feet flying in the channel between Maui and Lanai, right in that area, when BANG!!! There was a big bang and the helicopter starts bucking, and I look over at Ed and say, “What was that?” And, he looks over at me and says, ‘What did you do?’ You know, because I’m flying it. As we had briefed, he said, ‘I got it!’ And, he grabs the stick and dumps the collective, and it quits bucking. We were doing about 115 knots, so we have forward momentum.

He calls back to the crew chief and he says, 'Hey 'Slick' [phonetic], what's going on?' And, he said, 'Sir, the tail rotor is missing.' So, the whole tail rotor and gear box had ripped off-material failure. The tail-rotor, itself, had broken and that just ripped the whole thing off of the tail. So, we didn't have a tail-rotor.

Q: It's not going to fly very long without that, is it?

General Howell: No, so we're on our way down, and in a constant turn. We weren't doing this [General Howell illustrating with hands or visual aide rotation/spinning of helicopter???) because we had weather-cocking [???], and he had all of the collective off. So, we are in this constant descending turn. He's looking for a place to land. We had briefed, if we had to go into the water, that I would blow my door, so I blew my door. I'm in the left seat and he's in the right. We've got two guys in the back. And so, I blow my door, and I've done my job. I'm just trying to help him. He's trying to go for the beach at Lanai, and he said, 'There isn't a beach there.' It was just all trees, growing almost all the way up to the water at that point. So, he heads back toward the water. The last thing that I heard, he says, Get ready!' I look—I remember when it happened, when the guy said, 'We don't have any tail-rotor.' I remember Ed Langston said, 'Oh my God!' And so, I realized how serious it was. Ed Langston was a very fine Christian guy, so I knew that if he said that, we were in trouble. And, we're over there, skimming over the water, and I'd gone through the dunker exercise, and all that stuff. So, I've got one hand on my lap belt, and one hand on the instrument panel glare shield—you're supposed to have it someplace where you can stay oriented. And, I look under my hand, and it's on the glare shield. I'm looking and we're still doing 100 knots in that sucker and I'm thinking, "Man, this is going to be interesting." And, Ed says, 'Stand-by everybody. Lord—we are in your hands.' Then, he did one of the most fantastic maneuvers in that thing. He honked the nose up, rolled it over on the side, and pulled in the collective. It just went "Womp, Womp, Womp, Womp—WHAM!!!" [General Howell illustrating movement of helicopter with hands???) He slapped it down. I have no clue how much speed we had. We were still probably doing fifteen or twenty knots, but he slammed it down in the water. We rolled left, he always told me, 'If we go in the drink, we'll roll right and go out your door.' And, we slapped down [General Howell makes noise of helicopter going into, and under, the water)—and I'm underwater and I'm thinking, "He said that we were 'going to roll right'." But, we were over a reef, thank God. We were only about 100 meters from where this thing drops down about 1600 fathoms in that channel.

But, we were in about five feet of water. And so, settle, I realize that I can't go out the

door because I'm against something hard, the reef. So, I un-strap and I sort of pull up and my big old nose is above the water, and there's Ed crawling out of this big gaping hole. We're on our side. The rotor had come down when we hit and taken the top off, right over our heads. And, we are lucky that it didn't take our heads off. So, he crawls out. The right engine is out of the water, and it's still going. So, there's a lot of noise. We were carry fuel bags for extra fuel, so you can smell the fuel and the motor is running. It's just a dangerous situation; at least it seems to be. So, I crawl out behind him. I'm up on the side, which is the top now, and he's out on the water saying, 'Come on!' I want to go rescue the crew members, and be the hero. And so, I'm trying to crawl down the side of the aircraft to the door, to help those crew members, and Ed's yelling, 'Colonel, colonel!' I look and I say, "I'm going!" He said, 'Look!' Those guys are already on the beach. (laughing). They had gotten out of that thing and high-tailed it, they were already half-way to land.

Q: So, everybody was alright?

General Howell: Yes, so I slide over the side. The only really major injury that I had, the second step away from the helicopter in the water sloshing away, I bark my shin on a rotor's sharp edge and it just hurt like heck. That thing hurt for two week after that. But, we wade ashore. Ed wants to go back and shut down that engine because it's starting to shrill. I said, "You're not getting close to that airplane, just let it go. You've done good. You saved our lives." You know, he's always saying, 'Oh Colonel, I ruined your safety record [with shame in voice].' I said, "Man, are you serious? You saved our lives! Come on!" And, he did. He just did a great job. I found out later, that if you lose a tail-rotor it is probably an 80-20 chance that you are going to die that day, really.

Q: That's very serious.

General Howell: So, he did it. The motor finally freezes. I remember our survival training, in jets and going in the drink training, and I said, "Okay, we're all probably in shock. So, I want you two guys to look over each other and make sure that's there is no blood anywhere, and that we're all okay, no injuries. Check all of your limbs. So, Ed and I inspected each other, and we're okay. Then, we get out the emergency radios, and I'm listening and he's calling. And so, we get an airliner. A Pan Am airliner going into Honolulu comes up and he said, 'What's up? What's the problem?' And, we told him what happened. Ed said, 'Call the Coast Guard and tell them what happened, and to come help us out.' So, I tell you it seemed like in a wink of an eye, it couldn't

have been 15-20 minutes and here comes a [CH-] 130, Coast Guard, and almost knocks us down coming down the beach. And, they say, 'You guys okay? We'll send down divers and—.' I said, "No, we are all on the beach. We are fine. If you could send someone to pick us up..." And, right at that time, one of my [CH-] 53 drivers, who's coming back from the Big Island has heard all of this while trucking down. And, he says, 'Hey, I'll pick you up.' So, he comes in, it's "the Mad Mexican" if I can remember his name. Later he ended up at Headquarters with me, when I had APP, and did great work. He's a heck of a guy. But, he comes and lands his [CH-] 53, and there was a lot of overgrowth, but we hear it come in. We meet the crew members, trying to get us, as we're going through all of this underbrush. They lead us to the machine. I'll tell you the clearance between those big rotors and the palms trees around there were just—I mean that guy—thinking about it now--that could have been a catastrophe. But, we crawled in that thing and whooooosh. [sound of helicopter taking off]—and we're back at Kaneohe, and it's been about two and a half or three hours since we took off. That's how quick it was. Of course, we are soaking wet and we've got a bird in the water. And we start recover operations; Schwartz gets to work, and the next day we [CH-] 53-over a bunch of crews. We take a 6 x 6 truck over there on a 53, and they pull the engines off of that thing and then pull it out of the water, and haul it back. They start pouring fresh water on it, and bring a team out to assess it for \$499,000 in damage, Class B. (laughing).

Q: (laughing). There you go.

General Howell: That's Schwartz, and I think Schwartz gave a case of whiskey to the inspection crew, that came out and assessed it. So, that's what came out—I was just very sore. My whole left side got banged up pretty bad.

Q: No injuries or anything?

General Howell: No, and sort of got scared when I thought about it the next day. But we got through that really fine. And, of course, FMFPac was very happy, General Cooper and company, that it was a Class B material failure, not a Class A, human error.

Q: According to the record, you didn't have any Class As through the second half of 1984 all the way through 1985.

General Howell: In my last month as a group commander, we had an F-4 go down, on a night

intercept, into the water.

Q: Wow, did you lose the crew?

General Howell: Yes, it was just awful. It was sad.

Q: Was that 212?

General Howell: I don't know—I think it was 235. It just really broke my heart, losing them. Then, I almost had a perfect record throughout my whole time, command. We had already planned the change of command and all that stuff, then that occurred. We had a brand new Brigade CG, I was going to become his chief-of-staff, General [George L.] Cates, and I had to tell him, "You know, we lost that bird." That hurt. It really hurt to lose that crew.

Q: Sir, here's that message from Admiral Foley

General Howell: Yes, "Bravo-Zulu." (Then, General Howell reads message aloud quickly): "report results. Time launch. Mission capable aircraft outstanding performance of the 1st Marine Brigade percentage (one word inaudible) mission capable at start 'x' and 93 percentage at end is noted with great pleasure. They say that the figures lie and liars figure, but the numbers from 1st Brigade prove conclusively that you are as good as you say you are, and even better. Well done. Keep up the good work. Foley."

So, he didn't really apologize, but he recognized that...

Q: It looks like an apology to me, almost.

General Howell: Yes, and I'll tell you another thing to show you how classy he is...

Q: And, Dailey puts down here in this message: "1st Marine Brigade means MAG-24. JD."

General Howell: Yes. "that he was classy [phonetic]."

Q: So, I guess he did put it in your jacket or something?

General Howell: Yes, he must have. That was a great moment in sports. I'll tell you another thing, when Foley had his change of command they had a big luncheon for him at the Honolulu Country Club, up on the Pali Highway. I'd never been there before and we went there, and Foley got all of his Navy admirals and stuff—Dailey brings a herd of us over there. And, we sat down and in his address to his command he brought up this. He actually acknowledged me, he said, 'I want to tell you a story about this Marine over here—.' And, he actually told those guys what happened. That was pretty slick.

Q: Did you have some good training operations while you were there?

General Howell: Oh, it was fantastic. It was great. Once more I'd like to take credit but—well, you had Bill Nyland as the Ops Officer and we had a MACS [Marine air control squadron] commander who was—he was hard to live with, but the guy was really operationally oriented and tactically oriented—a guy by the name of Rag Burns. He later on became the chief-of-staff of 2nd MAW under [Rich] Hearney, and he was mine for a little while when I first got there. But, we organized combined arms exercises using the whole state of Hawaii. We would set up a remote field site for the helicopters to go in with troops, a MACS would have a radar up on one of the islands, either on Maui or Lanai or Molokai, to control everything. We'd bring C-130 tankers out there from the Wing at El Toro, and we would actually have troop movements, and then we would have fighters and A-4s going up to the Big Island and hitting targets, and then they'd have to fight their way back against aggressors. We would have the Air Force, and sometimes we would use our own TA-4s, as aggressor aircraft to intercept the F-4s trying to get home, and you'd fight them home. You'd have a MACS, and then we'd always have night ops taking troops into Kohoolawe. It was great stuff, really. I was so proud, and this was a full combined arms combination of using the whole MAGTF to do this—and Ron Christmas had the regiment. I mean we made a great team. Of course, the future Commandant had a battalion, and then became a Brigade Three [operations officer] General [Charles] Krulak, at the time LtCol Krulak and then became Col Krulak at that time. O.K. Steele was great—I was lucky, I had three wonderful Brigade commanders, but most of this sexy stuff happened when Dailey was out there. We did some great stuff. You see a photograph behind you on the wall—that's an observation post on the Big Island over the PTA live fire range, you know at the artillery range, and there's Dailey, Howell, and Christmas standing together, the command element. Right below them, you see that group—that Blues Brothers?

Q: Yes, yes tell me about that.

General Howell: That's the same three guys. That's the three of us doing the Blues Brothers.

Q: What's the story behind that? That's a legend, too.

General Howell: Well, it is. I don't know if you're ready for this story—(laughing).

Q: Sure.

General Howell: (laughing). We—turn off the thing, the machine for just one minute, so I can get this [phonetic].

(Recorder beeps once and turns off).

(Recorder turns back on with General Howell's wife, Janelle, in mid-sentence).

Janelle: ...it was the sea service wives.

General Howell: Yes, traditionally there is—I don't know if they still do it or not, but at that time...

Janelle: (Speaking from another room) Yes, they do.

General Howell: The Navy—the Navy is big at Pearl Harbor. You've got a submarine command, [and] they used to have a carrier [command] out there. You've got CINCPac, which is mostly Navy. CINC PacFleet, they would have a big what they called, Mardi Gras celebration at Pearl Harbor every year. And, part of that, the officers' wives club over there put on a big floor show, a big song-and-dance and acts and all that kind of stuff. They would practice this for four or five months and put on this show. They put it on either three separate nights, or four separate nights and it was a command performance, we would be required--we were under orders from the commanding General. They would have what they called, "Marine Night," which meant that the Commander of FMFPac had to direct all of his officers, from his staff at FMFPac in Honolulu and all of us over at K-Bay had to come in our dress whites, to attend and watch this performance.

So, we had gone to this thing under General Steele and watched it, and General Cooper. Then, General Gray comes in and we got Dailey—and we go over to this thing—and we go watch it, and it stunk! It was awful, and it's the same group of people who like to do that and they were awful—and they thought that they were so much better than they were, and they worked at it. We had to sit through that and it took forever, and then at the end of it, when we were with General Dailey—and at that time General Gray, we were invited by the CINCPacFleet, a big guy—I can't remember his name, he was very controversial. He had taken Foley's place. He invites the Marine, senior guys, over to his quarters for cocktails after this thing. So, we're over there drinking [entire section spoken with anger and disgust in voice].

Janel: [Interrupts]. No, Dailey had to put that on. Dailey had to put it on, and that was the "Marine Night," so it was Dailey's responsibility to have the cocktails.

General Howell: Oh, he had the cocktail party, but we had it on the other-side [Navy side of Oahu, i.e. Pearl Harbor].

Q: So, you had to find a place to put on the cocktail party?

General Howell: Yes, so we're there, but we've got these admirals and all that stuff there, and we go up and of course we've got some "knots" [alcohol induced personality] up. So, we get together—and we just—and the wives are just disgusted. We just made the statement to General Dailey—I said, "You know, General, without practicing we could put on a better act than that [stated with confidence and frustration]." And, he said, 'Okay, Howell. Prove it.'

Q: What kind of acts did the Navy put on that was so bad?

Janel: Singing and dancing. [Janel is now directly engaged in interview process rather than speaking from another room or whispering details to General Howell].

General Howell: Singing and dancing, and from Broadway, I mean actually taking Broadway—"I'm going to wash them man right at them [phonetic]" and doing—portraying those kinds of acts, and trying to be Broadway musical numbers...

Janel: These stupid, silly, things....

General Howell: with a bunch of people who couldn't sing or dance, and who really thought that they were cute.

Janel: They still do it.

General Howell: So, we got together with our wives, and Janel was the mastermind behind this, and of course the air wing guys "honcho-ed it" [took the lead], and Janel was a key player in this thing. We basically put out a call to all the commands, at the Brigade, that we were going to have "Zorro's Follies," General Dailey's call-sign was "Zorro." And, the rule here is, "each unit will be allowed to put on an act, of any kind—It can be a skit, it can be a song, whatever—, but it can only be three minutes long, a total of three minutes and it has to be in good taste. It can't have any foul language or nudity or any kind of lewd behavior, but anybody who wants to do it—and we'll have a dinner before and a dance afterwards. And, oh by-the-way, we're going to have—the whole theme is going to be 'tacky Hawaiian,' where everybody comes dressed in tacky Hawaiian outfits to watch it." And so, we end up maxing out the club. We had 500 people come to this thing...

Q: At Pearl Harbor?

Janel: K-bay.

General Howell: So, General Dailey, we tell him. We say, "We're going to do this." And, he says, 'Well, then Beak we've got to have an act.' So, Ron Christmas and I we're going to be the Blues Brothers. We decide together that we're going to be the Blues Brothers. This is about—two weeks before this happens my knee locks up and I had to go into—well about a month before—but I had to have surgery. I had to have arthroscopic surgery on my knee two weeks before this is going to happen. And so, I go to Ron and I say, "Man, I can't do it. Really, I can't." So, he goes to Dailey, and he says, 'You've got to take Beak's place.' And so, Dailey says, 'Well, hell—I was just waiting for somebody to ask.' So, they are going to be the Blues Brothers and I'm a cripple [cripple]. And so, a week before this thing Dailey calls me and he says, 'Beak, get over here.' And, I come over and he says, 'You're going to be—we've got to have a guitar player in this thing, and you're going to be the guitar player.' I said, "Sir, I can hardly walk." He said, 'I don't give a shit (General Howell laughing)!'

Q: (laughing).

General Howell: He said, ‘You’re going to, wrap it up, you’re going to be the guitar player.’ So, we practiced it twice and we’re pantomiming “I’m a Soul Man.” He invited General Gray to come over be the master-of-ceremonies. Who was his deputy at that time?

Janel: General [Richard T.] Trundy.

General Howell: Trundy. General Trundy comes over and he’s a gifted piano player—so in the interludes between acts Trundy is playing the piano and Gray is the master-of-ceremony, and he doesn’t really know what he’s getting into. He’s thinking that he’s going to be a part of something that’s really bad here, and nobody had seen anybody’s acts. Everybody practiced in secret and they decide to give the audience more fun—the wives wrapped up newspaper in....

Janel: Aluminum.

General Howell: Aluminum foil, so that, if “you don’t like that act” you could throw these aluminum balls at them.

Q: (laughing).

General Howell: And you only had three minutes, and then you had this big guy with a hook who could pull you off of the stage, if you took too much time. It was just a hoot. Then, they had these old bag ladies—you know in Hawaii they’ve got the bag ladies pushing grocery carts around—they had a couple of gals dress up as bag ladies and after every act they would come around and sweep up all of the balls and put them back in their shopping carts, and then they’d pass them out in the crowd again. It was just great. And so, this thing starts with the Blues Brothers. They open up the stage and here we are doing it, and it’s a big hit. Nobody can figure out who it is at first, and then figure out who it is. We wanted to be first so we could go out and drink, and watch everybody. And so, we watch and there are all kinds of crazy acts, and it was just—some of them are lousy, most of them are okay, and some of them are really very good. It was a lot of fun, and we’re drinking and having fun and it’s just packed—and old Lou Lagerra, the guy who ran the club, he had a buffet up on the top part there. He got 500 people through that in thirty minutes. And down and eating, and ready to go. So, that thing went off with out a hitch. It took about an hour and a

half. Then, we had a big dance afterwards. But, at the very end of the thing General Gray stands up. Dailey came and gave him a little gift and it was just a t-shirt saying, “Because I’m the Boss that’s why!” You know, it was something like that. And, Gray just told the crowd [it was one of these classic things] he said, ‘You know I’ve been in three wars and two Texas State Fairs, but I’ve never seen anything like this in my life.’ (General Howell laughing).

Q: Classic comment.

General Howell: That’s was a classic comment. Then, all of the sudden, the people are chanting and saying, “Blues Brothers, Blues Brothers....” So, they wanted an encore. So, we had to get back up and we gave our act. We did it again. We actually did it a second time. This time we were just drunker than skunks. But, it was just one of those great events, and so the next year Dailey---of course, he only had one year out there and went on to greater [things], he became [Keith] Smith’s deputy in Aviation. And so, we get General Cates. So, the next year we have “Cates’ Capers,” and we put on another act. It was another smash hit. We had a great time. I don’t know if they continued the act after we left. But it was really a hoot. It was really fun. When I got to the Johnson Space Center, we ended up having “Beak’s Bash”, and we did something similar during my tenure, for two years there.

Q: Oh really?

General Howell: People had a great time.

Q: Do you remember Mike Albo “Dog Food,” getting the Aviator of the Year award, while you were there?

General Howell: I remember it, but not a lot. He’s a good man. I think he was well deserved, but there were a lot of guys that deserve it and all of those awards I’m a little—they are always sort of bittersweet to me because I’ve been in outfits that should have gotten it, that didn’t; and then I was in an outfit that shouldn’t have gotten it, and did. So, it’s—the people that get it do deserve it. There are a lot of other people who do—the awards thing, it’s a wonderful thing, but I don’t put a lot of weight on any of that, personally.

Q: I was just wondering what he had done, I mean he’s a good pilot and everything, but I was just

wondering what had happened.

General Howell: He was in 212, wasn't he?

Q: Yes.

General Howell: 212 had a guy named "Z-man", Zimmerman. He was one of the most gifted awards' writers in the world. Every squadron that Z-man has been in has won an award. He knows how to do it. So, just watch where Z-man is and that squadron is going to get an award or one of their crew is going to get an award.

Q: Right, okay.

General Howell: I hate to do that, but in my experience Z-man had that gift.

Q: Anything else on MAG-24, before we move on?

General Howell: I can say this, that air group was really solid because they had good leadership and they had great machines. I'll tell you, we had people, you had, Don Schwartz. We had guys like Bill Nyland, George Tullos...

Q: Yes, Tullos had [VMFA] 235, right?

General Howell: Larry Staack. Jim Amos had MABS [Marine air base squadron], and then became the XO of 212.

Q: Larry Staack had a squadron?

General Howell: No. He was always with Cajun [Tullos].

Q: Oh, I see.

General Howell: You know Larry was "silent-swift-and deadly." He was good. You know later, he did get Beaufort as a command. He had command of MCAS Beaufort. So, he did get a

command, finally.

Q: I didn't know that.

General Howell: But, you had Ed Langston, became a general officer. He commanded HMX-1, later on. We had a helicopter guy who made general officer—some great guys. And so, I was just very fortunate to be there at that time, in that atmosphere. That was one of the most wonderful experiences of my life, was my three years out in the Brigade. And, of course, as chief-of-staff under Cates I learned a lot as a chief-of-staff. George Cates was a quiet man, and a very talented, great guy.

Q: What does a chief-of-staff do at the 1st MAB?

General Howell: You're like any other chief-of-staff, you run the staff, you get the guidance from the boss, and then you carry it out; you get it carried out for him and take care of him. You make the boss look good, that was my main purpose. We had a great staff. You know, he gives guidance to the commands, that's what he does. I take care of the staff and try to make his wishes come true. I worked hard at it and we had a bunch of great guys doing it. Roger [Stretch] Jaroch was the G-3; he was a big tall guy; Darrell Moore was the Staff Secretary and later made general officer; we just really had some good people, throughout that whole Brigade.

Q: You were there almost a year as chief-of-staff?

General Howell: Yes. An event came up, that wasn't a happy event, I was in the zone for BG that year and didn't make it. I didn't get it. I was the last name of the zone. So, it always hurts to get passed over, but I realized that I was put in a zone with a bunch of guys that I'd never been in with before: Duane Wills, and a bunch of guys who were senior to me. I'd never been in a promotion zone with any of those guys, then all-of-the-sudden I'm in and I'm the last guy on the list. I got passed over, so very well...

Q: It's very difficult to make brigadier, isn't it?

General Howell: Yes. But, I'm feeling like I'm a frontrunner and I'd been told by some people that, 'Hey, you know you're probably going to be a general officer.' So, there's a...

Q: You're fitness reports are starting to say that, you "should be a general officer."

General Howell: Is that right?

Q: One of them said, "PROMOTE HIM NOW!" Along that time frame.

General Howell: Well, all of that, you know with Steele and Dailey and Cates, all of them, said those things. So, you start believing it and then you realize that it's a crap shoot. You know, that there are just so many highly qualified guys. So, it's sort of a luck of the draw with who's on the board, who knows you, and that kind of stuff. You find out too, that that's one of the risks of being out in Hawaii, it's that you're out of the mainstream. You know, there you are really big, but hardly anybody—you're not really involved in what's going on in the continental United States and that's where most of the action is. That's where a lot of the heavies see the senior officers on the east and west coast. They don't see you out in Hawaii. So, that's part of it. But, I went back to Headquarters after that and got APP. There was never a promise, but there was the indication that "you do well at APP and you'll probably make it this time." So, I worked hard and had a great time. Keith Smith was a great DCS Aviation at Headquarters. Did you want to ask anymore questions about the Brigade or...?

Q: No, no I had asked if you had any final comments and so—I'm ready to move on.

General Howell: It was a great experience. People were wonderful and I was lucky to serve under the people that I served under, and serve with the people I served with. In my life's experience that was one of the most joyous occasions for me, in the Marine Corps. I found that—yes, I guess that I'll make this statement that being a group commander—there's nothing like being a squadron commander. You know, you are the squadron and the squadron is you. But, the squadron is really stressful. You want it to be wonderful. You suffer when it suffers. When you get to be a group commander you're a granddad. The squadron commanders are the single parents of an only child, and they all have their children; and you're the granddaddy. So, when one of the children screws up you give it back to the parent and say, "Change it's diapers. Fix it." Then, you go and play with the other grandchildren that are having fun. So, [being] a group commander is a great deal. Being granddaddy is fun, and that's what a group commander is. So, I just had a great time. But, our main purpose was to furnish combat ready squadrons for WestPac and for the "Floats" [MEU

deployments], and we did that well. We got good reports and I was very proud of those guys.

Q: That concept is sort of—what you have as a component commander later on?

General Howell: Yes, it's the same thing. It's a much bigger scale. But, to me it was very simple. I had seen people who wanted to make something out of an opportunity for glorification and it gets in the way of what the purpose of the organization is. To me, our only purpose was to serve those people. [General Howell's motto and frequent guidance stated to staff]: "If we are as good as we think we are, then we'll get credit for it. But, we shouldn't have to do anything extraordinary to try to get credit." So, that always pays off. That's always paid off for me.

Q: So, you go to DC; were you glad to get back to that part of the world?

General Howell: Well, no. (laughing). I never had a bad day in Hawaii and never had a good day in DC. But, I had a great opportunity; APP is a plum job for a colonel in Aviation. It's the essence of Marine aviation in Washington. So, to be in that position was a great honor.

Q: Would you say it indicates that someone is upwardly mobile?

General Howell: Yes, most APP's at Headquarters have become general officers. It's just one of those "movers' billets." So, it's a nice indication, but it's very stressful and very hard. It's very satisfying and rewarding. Of course, General [Keith] Smith was a true leader. It was a tough time for Marine aviation at that time.

Q: Why was that?

General Howell: General [Al] Gray was not that fond of fixed-wing aviation. He thought that we were taking too many qualified—he had all those notions of "we took all the qualified guys—." The Marine Corps was being told "to cut the numbers." So, he wanted to cut aviation along with the ground, and he was being briefed that 'We've got—if you look at our force structure, we have an excess of ground, but not an excess of air.' He didn't want to hear that. He was very upset with that. I was at a briefing where he was told that, General Mundy was the assistant Ops for Headquarters there, Assistant for PP&O [Plans, Programs and Operations]. He was the assistant, and [the Director of PP&O] he let Mundy brief that, 'If we are going to cut anybody it ought to be

the ground.’ Gray chewed him—I mean just blew apart. Smith wasn’t there that day, so I represented him at this table with all these general officers; and that was quite an experience. What really bothered me—that three-star general turns to General Gray and he says, ‘Well, you know I agree, Commandant. I don’t know why he briefed that. I told him not to brief that.’ He just screwed Mundy, and Mundy took it like a champ and that was his BOSS! Thank God that guy retired and went out, because that guy had no business...

Q: He had been briefed. He told him to brief it?

General Howell: Oh, he approved it. That was his briefing. Mundy was just giving him the brief for it. Then, he just turned on him. That was terrible.

Q: Mundy never said anything?

General Howell: Never. He took it like a champ, like a gentleman.

Q: But, Gray tore him up?

General Howell: Oh, he just ruthless. He didn’t like Mundy. He wasn’t that fond of Mundy. He didn’t want Mundy to be the Commandant. But, I really respected him. Again, I didn’t know General Mundy, but I had met him and he was always very pleasant. You know, he’s a handsome guy. He’s the kind of guy that you respect. I really, I tell you, his marks went way up that day because he didn’t say a thing. He took it on the chin, just took it like a man, and didn’t turn on his boss. He had every right to tell him, ‘To go screw himself.’ I learned a lot that day.

Q: Hold your fire.

General Howell: Yes. Gray then turns to me and says, ‘Why aren’t you giving things up!?!’ And, I—boy, I was prepared. I always did my homework. I said, “Sir, we have studied this and General Smith wants me to report to you that we are undermanned, and we actually—when you sort it out, we need more instead of less.” And, he went, ‘WELL! I! DON’T! WE! WOW! [phonetic] (unintelligible screaming from General Gray).’ I mean he just ripped me. He was so pissed off at me. But, it didn’t bother me. It’s funny how things go. So many people were afraid of General Gray, and intimidated by him and he always tickled the shit out of me. I always thought that he

was funny as hell. I used to—I had a hard time not smiling every time I got around him. It used to infuriate him because I think he realized—he sensed that I just couldn’t take him seriously and it just pissed him off. He was always pissed off at me. Every time we got together he fussed at me; nothing that I could do about it.

Q: Sort of a unique chemistry there.

General Howell: Yes, and another bad situation—you know, Gray came into that building saying, ‘All these Headquarters pukes are up here. They love it up here. I’m a Fleet-FMF guy. You guys don’t know what it’s really like.’ That really pissed me off. I’d just come from the FMF and you know here he is telling me that I’m, “a Headquarters puke.” That just really bothered me. He brought in—he did bring his entourage, wherever he went he had his—I call him his “bully boys.” He had a group of lieutenant colonels and colonels that had been with him for the last five to eight years. That just really bothered me, and those guys would go around telling general officers what to do, you know, “the General-- the Commandant wants you do to this and wants you to do that.” And, one of those guys, a big guy—later on, I made peace with him later on when he was the chief of staff down at Lejeune, right before he retired. But, he was up there on Gray’s staff. But he comes in my office one day—I’d been there about two months—and he comes in and he says, ‘You are directed to do this, this, and this.’ And, these were command aviation decisions that he wanted me to do. I said, “Well, will you remind me who you are and why you are telling me this?” He said, ‘I’m coming because the Commandant of the Marine Corps has told me to tell you to do this.’ I said, “Well, colonel, does General Smith know about this.” He said, ‘General Gray told me to come and tell you to do this.’ I said, “Colonel, I work for General Smith. So, until he tells me to do this I’m not going to do it, and would you please get the heck out of my office!” And, he said, ‘You are going to regret this!’ So, I said, “Leave!” And so, that was just a bad situation. It was a struggle. Overall, the Marine Corps was doing okay, but there was struggle in the Headquarters between parties, and it was very fratricidal. It was really awful. Gray was a charismatic leader, people love him for good reason.

Q: Visionary, with the maneuver warfare.

General Howell: Visionary. He said great things, you know, all that kind of stuff. But, as a Commandant he did things, and didn’t do things, that he should have done. You know, when he left office, they went in, and they found in his private head stacks of promotion warrants and things

that he had not signed; and orders and things. I mean just paperwork stacked on top of paperwork that he should have signed and gotten out of there, people had been stymied because the Commandant wouldn't do his job; and that kind of crap. Mundy inherited all that stuff. Of course, you never heard him say anything about it. He was just too much of a gentleman. But, so all that kind of crap—so I've got to tell you it was, for the "Beak," I was in a great job with great people who were just doing great. I mean I was so proud of my office in APP and the guys working. It was a wonderful thing to be working for Keith Smith. General [Charles] Pitman came in there and was a great deputy to Smith, really a wheeler and dealer. The guy was always—I'd always wondered about him—he's a little rough around the edges, and he's quite a character—never saw anybody do better paperwork than him. If you want somebody to write the right kind of point paper, and memo, Pitman was really gifted. So, there's good reason to why he got to where he was. But, he's very helicopter biased, probably for good reason too. He'd had to protect helicopters his whole life, and so he had misgivings about us fixed wing guys. But, we got along fine because I thought he was a very highly qualified guy. Promotion zone comes up again and I don't make it again.

Q: You got passed again?

General Howell: I got passed again. And so, Rich Hearney had come into APW, and he gets picked up. Harry Blot was up there and had the Harrier program. He gets picked up. So, I realize my days are over and it's time to go. So, when the dust settles Keith Smith is leaving, Pitman gets another star and is coming up to be DCS Aviation and I go into him and say, "Sir, I'm here to serve you. I know that I've been—I'm not a front-runner, and you probably want to put somebody in APP who is, who you are trying to get a star for." And, he said, 'Well, yes you are right. You are doing a great job, but that's the reality and...' He said, 'What do you want to do? I said, "Well, it's time for me to retire from the Marine Corps, but—my son is going to be a senior this next year, down at Richmond, and he's playing soccer down there. General I don't want to retire in Washington. When I retire I'm going back to Texas. I'm going home. Whatever I do, digging ditches, I'm going to go back to Texas. So, with your permission I'd like to stay in for another year, up here, and the OP-50M billet, which I had four and a half years ago, is opening up again. If you see fit, I would like to come and take that. I will serve you as loyally as I can over there, and help you." He said, 'Man, you've got it.' So, I went back over to the Pentagon to be OP-50M. And so, that's where I went for my next year out there.

Q: Followed Col Norm Ehlert in there, didn't you?

General Howell: Yes, and he made general. Norm was a great guy. He was a great friend and he had come into APP, when I was APP, too. He had been my assistant for a while, and then went down to APW. We became fast friends. He's one of the most quality guys—you know he's dead now, he passed away...

Q: No, I didn't know that.

General Howell: It's just terrible, they were retired out to Seattle and he was living there, looking at the ocean, and the life of Riley. He got cancer and (fingers snap together) killed him so quickly, it was unbelievable. I got to talk to him his last week, but he was one of the greatest guys that I've ever known, "Skunk."

Q: Was he an F-18 pilot?

General Howell: No, he was an "Intruder" A-6 guy. He went around in an A-6 bubble. But, ended up flying F-18's in his commands because he had command down at Okinawa, of a wing—I think—or something, or the MEF out there. Then, he came back and then was DCS Aviation, I think. The reason he left is he got picked up for general officer (laughing). So, I took his place and worked hard. It was a very typical situation of just dealing with the Navy, but I knew how to do it. And, I got along with those guys, but kept General Pitman informed. And, I worked hard, up and down the hallway. I think I was doing good work, but, anyway, that fall—the next fall, just by coincidence—University of Richmond had come up to Washington and played George Washington, I think, in soccer. And so, Janel had come by the Pentagon, picked me up, and we went to the ball game. And we watched it. They got beat. Pissed me off! But, we come back to the Pentagon, she drops me off and I'm walking back up to the office and it's about 5:30 P.M., in the afternoon. I was usually a typical Pentagon officer, I was usually there from about 6:30 A.M., in the morning until 6:30 P.M., in the evening; typical stuff. So, I'm walking up on the fourth deck, up that hallway there, and there's a bunch of people standing around the office and somebody screams, 'There-He-Is! and 'Get-Down-Here-Beak! Where-Have-You-Been?' And, I kind of said, "What's going on?" They said, 'The Commandant of the Marine Corps is trying to call you! He wants to talk to you!' And, I'm thinking, "What the hell is going on here?" And so, I called over and they said, 'General Gray had to leave on a trip, but the Assistant Commandant wants to talk to

you.’ General Joe Went, great guy, wonderful wife and he calls, he said, ‘Beak, it’s my pleasure to tell you that you’ve been selected for brigadier general.’ And, it was just—I was astounded.

Q: Totally unexpected?

General Howell: Yes, so it just—rumors are flying all over the place, and some people, who love to pass rumors, had called me—several people had said, ‘Hey, I’m hearing good things about you. I’m hearing that you’re on the list.’ And, I’d say, “Yes. Yes, I heard that last year, too.” So, some people were saying that kind of stuff. But, who knows—but, it happened and it changed my whole life because I was planning—I was going to retire and get on with life, and then the whole life change and you become a general. And, it’s just stepping into a new atmosphere and a whole new—it’s like going into a different environment, a different element. What was that TV show, the “Twilight Zone” or something.

Q: How is it different?

General Howell: People treat you so differently and in the Marine Corps particularly, Marines just treat you like a god. It just—you’ve got to watch out. But, it’s wonderful. It’s euphoria for quite awhile there. So, I go to the “knife-and-fork” school you know, and the first person to greet us is General Gray. And we’re all in there in our Class-A’s, and it’s funny....

Q: General Gray, didn’t he help in the promotion, or did you hear?

General Howell: He wasn’t on the board, thank goodness, but there were people—I think Dailey was on that board, and that certainly didn’t hurt me. Yes. But, Lord only knows what convinced them—they had to do—to take a twice passed over guy and to make him a general. That was something. But, it happened. Nobody has ever told me what happened on that thing.

Q: Interesting.

General Howell: It’s interesting. I’ll never know. I don’t think, and it’s because of the board—I’ve been on boards since then, I’ve been on several general officers’ boards and you just don’t talk about it. It is just something that you don’t do. Because too many people can be hurt, if you talk about it.

Q: I just know that that's a huge step.

General Howell: Yes, and it is a crap shoot. I'll tell you, since I expected to be a general it really hurt not to be selected when I wasn't selected; particularly when I came back to DC sort of with the assurance that, "Hey, don't worry." And then, it didn't happen. It was like getting a knife in the heart. But, I'll tell you what, it was one of the best things that ever happened to me because it made me understand, when you don't make it what happens, how you feel, and it made me appreciate those poor guys. There's so many—you know General Gray said a wonderful thing to our group when he first came in there, he said, 'You know I'm supposed to be here to compliment you, and congratulate you and tell you how great you are and all that.' But, he said, 'Let me just say one thing right at the beginning, you should—every morning when you put on your socks I want you to remember this—that for every one of you there are at least four other guys just as qualified as you, and maybe more qualified than you to make general officer and you made it and they didn't. So, never forget that.' And, he was right and I'll give him that. He was absolutely right and I've tried to remember that. Because I've been there and I knew how they felt. So, it's funny, I had no expectations of making it when I did make it. So, it was a real gift. It was a nice gift and not expected. So, I just sort of—I enjoyed it very much—and had Krulak in that class.

Q: What was your impression of him, when you met him out in Hawaii?

General Howell: We—I was not that impressed. He had a wonderful reputation. He was gung-ho. He was so enthusiastic, and so "go-go-go," that I thought—in that impression—that he was "selling" Krulak. I didn't realize that that's just the way he is. I learned to really get to know him later, and I just admired him. I love him, like a brother. But, at that time I thought he was a little go-getter guy, who was trying impress the world with how great he was. That was the impression I got.

Q: Almost second lieutenant-like, or something?

General Howell: Yes, and, "Look at me. Look at me. Look at me." When he was around Dailey, or the "heavies," it seemed like he was going out of his way to impress them. And, if it wasn't his idea then he wasn't interested. Well, I found out—well, nobody is perfect—but the guy is sincerely a wonderful man, who really wants to do the right thing for the Marine Corps. So, I

learned—and I think that he matured too. You know, we all get wiser—older and wiser. So, he matured and became even better—he was always a—in his heart—pure, good man. He just better and he became—he really grew into the person that he became. But, we frankly didn't get along very well. Out at the Brigade, we sort of bumped heads on some things. I told you about these big exercises we were doing, well he thought that they were interfering with some things that he was trying to plan to do. And so, there was never the cooperation that I had hoped for, in that regard, when he was up on Brigade staff. Then, when he became MCCDC [Marine Corps Combat Development Command] he was really—we had some differences about the Harrier. He understood, he had the vision of why the Harrier was so important. I thought he was sacrificing more important things to support that, and that really bothered me. We had some long talks about that. We didn't agree.

Q: When he had MCCDC, you were what?

General Howell: I was 2nd MAW.

Q: You were 2d MAW at that time, okay, we'll get to that. Anyway, I think that we're about caught up, Sir.

General Howell: You're kidding?

END OF SESSION III



Second Lieutenant Jeff Howell participating in anti-guerilla warfare training at the Northern Training Area, Okinawa, Japan, 1963.

First Lieutenants Drax Williams (L) and Jeff Howell pose in front of the T-2 Buckeye as they begin basic jet training in 1964. Twenty-five years later they would be promoted to brigadier general together.





Captain Jeff Howell (seated in front seat), 1st Lieutenant Otis McCord (next to Howell), 1st Lieutenant Chuck Fleming (in rear seat) and 1st Lieutenant Walt Samora (next to Fleming) aboard a VMFA-542 F-4 in 1967 at MCAS Chu Lai, RVN.

Jeff Howell, aka "Beak" is promoted to major in 1968 while serving as an instructor in Training Squadron 21 (VT-21) at NAS Kingsville, TX. Wife Janel does the honors.





Major J.D. Howell, F-4 pilot and aircraft maintenance officer for VMFA-115 based at the Royal Tai Airbase, Nam Phong, Thailand, aka: "The Rose Garden", 1972, gets a mud bath at a rare squadron party.

Return to the Rose Garden. Major Howell 1972 on the flight line at Royal Tai Airbase, Nam Phong, Thailand, back from a mission in Route Package 1 over Vietnam.





Major J.D. Howell with children Jay and Missy after chapel in 1974 at the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis.

VMFA-212 "Lancers" Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Jefferson D. Howell in 1979.





OP 1 at Pohakuloa Training Area, Island of Hawaii, 1985, L-R: Colonel Beak Howell (Commanding MAG-24), Brigadier General Jack Dailey (Commanding the 1st Marine Brigade), Colonel Charles Krulak (G-3, 1st Marine Brigade), and Colonel Ron Christmas (Commanding the 3rd Marine Regiment) observe air support and artillery fire. The four officers would later accumulate 14 total stars among them with Krulak becoming Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Colonel J.D. Howell 1986, after leading a flight of MAG-24 F-4S "Phantoms" back into MCAS Kaneohe Bay, HI after the runway had been reopened following four months of being repaired.





The Blues Brothers aka, L-R: Colonel (then) Ron Christmas, Colonel (then) J.D. Howell and Brigadier General (then) John Dailey, perform in support of Zorro's Follies held at the MCAS Kaneohe Bay, HI officers club in 1986.

Kolsas, Norway, 1990. Brigadier General J.D. Howell cuts a piece of birthday cake for General Sir Patrick Palmer, CINC Allied Forces Northern Command, NATO during the Marine Corps Birthday celebration. The Marine corporal is unidentified.





Major General (then) Spider Nyland and Lieutenant General Howell entertain fellow general officers and their ladies with a rendition of "Teen Angel", at the Officers Club at Quantico, VA.

The Grey Eagle. Presentation of Grey Eagle award to General Howell at MCAS Cherry Point, NC in 1998; the Grey Eagle is the Marine officer on active duty with the earliest 'winging' date. Making the presentation to General Howell (center) are Generals Rich Hearney (Ret) (in civilian clothes) and General Charles Krulak, Commandant of the Marine Corps.





Change of Command parade. Present and former commanders of MarForPac review the change of command parade held at MCAS Kaneohe Bay, HI in 1998 after command was passed from Lieutenant General Jefferson D. Howell to Lieutenant General Carl Fulford. L-R: Lieutenant Generals Fulford, Howell, Hank Stackpole (Ret) and Commandant of the Marine Corps General Charles C. Krulak.

The immediate Beak Howell clan gathers for a family photo in Clear Lake, Texas in 2003. Seated L-R: Jay with Teegan Howell, Beak with Colton Howell, and Steve Strubbe with Wolfgang. Back row L-R: Beth Howell, Janel Howell and Melissa Strubbe.





Director of the Johnson Space Center, Jefferson D. Howell straps in for a ride in a NASA Dryden F-18 Hornet in 2004.

SESSION IV

11 May 2006

Q: This is the fourth session of the interview with Lieutenant General Howell. Today's date is 11th of May 2006. We finished up talking about when you had APP [Aviation Plans and Programs] yesterday, but there was a couple other things in that regard that I wanted to ask about.

Did you do any work at that time on the Osprey, the MV-22 during that period?

General Howell: As a matter of fact, we had started working on that back in the early '80s when I was there before, and then it was really coming, it was becoming a real force. The big thing when I got back there in '89, I guess, or '88, and I was in APP and then OP-50 M. The DOD kept wanting to kill it, and the Senate kept putting it back in. And the Marine Corps was just hanging on by their fingernails, you know just tried to keep from getting in trouble with the bosses but at the same time hoping that the thing would stay alive. And so they kept, I think it was a significant amount of money and I wouldn't want to say how much because I'd be wrong, I can't remember. I want to say like 500 million dollars but I might be wrong. It kept getting put in by the Congress, and then it would be taken away by DOD, and then they'd put it back in when they passed the budget. And so we kept by order of the Congress, kept Bell and Boeing developing the thing. And it just sort of hung on and it kept the development continued even though it was just very tedious and very slow. But it was happening and I think was, Dick Cheney, the Secretary of Defense at that time, and I'm trying to remember who the, it wasn't Chairman but the Assistant Chairman was an Air Force general and we were told you know the mythology or the rumor was that Cheney when he became the Secretary of Defense said we got too many of these big programs, which should we cut? And he got with his higher ups, and the Air Force guys said the V-22, you don't need them. And the Navy didn't fight it and so the Marines got screwed. That was the theory. And so Cheney, once he makes a decision you know he's a stubborn man and he sticks by his position. There is probably a lot more to it than that but we felt like we had not gotten a fair hearing on that thing. And so the Marine Corps, here we were stuck with the CH-46. It was old; most of them had been in Vietnam and had been reworked and straps put on the middle of them and new transmissions and all kinds of mods to them but the machines were just getting terribly old. And so we just kept hanging on there. And the other aspect of it was that I had said yesterday that I felt like a lot of sort of the Marine Corps unique funding that the Marines could spend on their own stuff that they normally

spend on helicopters had gone for the AV-8B. That was another drain on resources for the helicopters. So both the helicopter program and the V-22 were both getting nailed and that really put us in a tough situation. I just noted later on you had to go and fly the SH-60 because we were looking at it.

Q: Were you?

General Howell: Yes. I know General [Charles H.] Pitman was.

Q: The Black Hawk.

General Howell: Yes the Black Hawk, we had to. But we wanted something you know we could drive a vehicle into. You know we wanted something with a ramp on the back and the SH-60 didn't have that and so that was sort of the kicker on this thing. So, that was just truly a struggle. We fought for it at every chance we could but kept it going, kept it going. But it was a battle royal.

Q: Are you a believer in it?

General Howell: Yes.

Q: Had a lot of confidence in it?

General Howell: I got to, I guess when I was with Duane Wills, got to go and fly the X-15 and I really was impressed with that technology and what that vehicle can do where you can lift off, you know, go into a hover, start going forward and by the end of the field you're up to 150, 200 knots and then you go up and cruise at almost 300 knots, 280 knots. It is so superior to anything we could do. It had two things, the speed, getting people back and forth and the range, the combat radius. I had never understood until I became a group commander of MAG 24 how limited the combat radius was on our helicopters. And you know you've got to get some fuel, refueling points way out there real quick or you're going to have problems just even with helicopters you have. The most limited was the Huey. Huey only had a combat radius of about 120 miles or less.

Q: Slow too.

General Howell: Yes slow. The 46 wasn't much better. The 53 had good combat radius, but it was supposed to be a trash hauler and not a troop hauler. However, we made it into a troop transport and it is just troubling to me to stick that many Marines into one machine like that. You know, getting 30 to 40 Marines into a 53 out of necessity and putting all that number at risk in one machine in a combat situation is really not smart. But we were doing that and we're, still doing it I think. It just it really frightens me the way we use the 53 as a troop transport in combat situation. That is really a mistake. It just is a catastrophe waiting to happen and we have had a couple of those over the last ten years.

Q: They used 53s to haul troops up into Afghanistan, when they first went in there.

General Howell: Well the range you know. It is the thing, the range. Fuel's a problem, the refueling and the fuel problem, so. So yes the whole time I was there at Headquarters both then and then later on that we were doing battle royal to save the Osprey.

Q: That is such a political thing too.

General Howell: Oh yes; I say one thing, you know I'm very critical of the Air Force and the way they go their own way. The Air Force committed to it for their Special Forces and they stuck to that. I'll say that for them. They never backed off. And I was waiting for them to do it but they didn't. They were a real ally, couldn't get the Army to even take a nibble. Now my prediction, now this was Howell's prediction back in the '80s: was that when this thing comes to be and proven in this war, the Army is going to buy five times more V-22s than the Marine Corps will. They'll have to because it really changes maneuver warfare with a V-22; and so when we get past that critical mass of the expense of it and the slow rate of production. If we get over that hump, that is going to be an incredibly versatile and advanced machine for moving men and equipment rapidly from one place to the other.

Q: Whoever had the vision on that is really a visionary of Marine aviation and I guess it was, from what I've learned it was Tom Miller who had a lot to do with that as well as the Harrier.

General Howell: He was a great supporter, he was gone by the time we got that thing going but I think you know Pitman was a big pusher but really the fixed wing guys really supported it

tremendously. You know General [William H.] Fitch and General Duane Wills. He pushed for it you know and he was DCS Aviation. So it was always strongly supported by DCS for Aviation no matter whether it was a helicopter or fixed wing, they didn't care.

Q: What about the F-18D. Some of those battles were being fought too.

General Howell: They were. And the Navy did not want to get close to it, they saw it as a threat to their "electrics" [EA-6B], and the A-6 and so once you got a D with two seats you'd got an advanced weapons system in there, you got something that has got the same capabilities as an Intruder except it doesn't have the range but it's got the weapons system. And they didn't like it, they really didn't; so there was a big argument that the F-18D cannot go aboard ship that it didn't have enough bring back to go aboard the ship. If you were going to put pods on it for either ECM or for attack, long range attack, you got to carry extra stuff you know and they're saying if you put that stuff on there you had to bring it back to the boat. And very expensive precise weapons you know in those days that sometimes you don't expend that stuff so you want to bring it back. Well if you had to do that you didn't have enough fuel for it to work around the boat. All that was going on and there were just all kinds of tests done, Pax River and other places. There was just this loud hue and cry that the F-18D would not be a carrier suitable aircraft. And the Marines went ahead and pushed for it and got it and it has been a great machine and finally the Navy said, 'Well, OK but we want something with more gas.' And so by the time they started flying and realized what a wonderful machine it was then all of a sudden they go for the bigger fuel, you know the bigger wing with more gas. That really was what the [F-18] E and F gave them, they were able to upgrade everything when they got that airplane.

It was just, originally the F-18, you know A,B,C and then later the D were all just huge battles the Marine Corps fighting for these things and getting pushed down. The F-14 was still battling, had to stay in, they had the new F-14D, I guess it was with the big engines; and incredible machine but incredibly expensive. And finally even the Navy since they were starting to fly the attack F-18s were starting to compare on the boat the deck space of the aircraft and the boarding rates, and the efficiency and the weapons system and the maintenance and man-hours per flight hours. And the F-14 was just a huge, just sucked up man-hours and fuel and everything else, and so they lost that battle. But they were still fighting like heck for it. The Tomcat was a very powerful community. It really was really weird, not weird but obvious how powerful Grumman was and the F-14 because when those guys would visit the Pentagon, any contractor coming up there to visit the admirals or what have you, they would have to have an appointment, they usually

would have an officer escorting one of them. The Grumman guys could just walk in any time, breeze in there any time, just walk in, and start shooting the bull. I mean that is how tight they were. And so it was an interesting thing. But we had, it was like I said, that was a tough time. When I was at the Headquarters our own internal Marine Corps with General [Al] Gray's people and aviation, there was a lot of tension, incredible tension. And that was more over manpower and budget that he wanted to put money other places and he felt like the aviation was just this big albatross hanging around his neck. He just didn't appreciate it that much. And then later between us and the Navy on the Osprey and the Harrier and the F-18 and F-18D, there were just constant battles. Every time a budget cycle would come up or money issues. Because of the budget cycle you were in a continuous cycle of either working, working this year's budget with the Congress; trying to execute last years budget which had been altered; and then the year after but you're working the POM continuously and it was just continuous. You were going from one fight to the other. You had to really keep it straight which year you were working on and on a daily basis you would get confused. It was something else.

Q: Were you going up to Congress as a representative of APP?

General Howell: No. I never testified before Congress. I didn't do that until I was MarForPac.

Q: Is there some key people that were behind the F-18?

General Howell: [General John] Dailey and Fitch. They were just incredible. I'm sure, you know [Richard D.] Hearney as APW [Aviation weapons requirements branch], but he was really-the Harrier was just his baby, but he supported the F-18 as well. I'm trying to think who else was there at that time. I think our common support of the aircraft was because of the utility of the airplane.

Q: So it wasn't some of the RIOs [radar intercept officer] who were pushing it necessarily.

General Howell: No. The RIOs didn't like it at all.

Q: Why is that?

General Howell: Because they were going out of business. The original F-18 was single seat. We had a long time there where we'd knocked off all the RIO acquisition and training, and we lost a

lot of very capable, very gifted back-seaters because we ran out of business for them. When we went on to the D, we had to start the program all over again because we had that big gap. But those guys, a lot of guys were bitter about that single seat airplane. I got to tell you as an F-4 guy, you couldn't fly the F-4 without the back seat. You had to have that crew, that crew concept. I was a firm believer in that but I guarantee you the minute I sat down in an F-18, A, B or C, it didn't matter, the aircraft was just built around a single person. In that aircraft you were better off in an aircraft by yourself than you were with somebody else, it just slowed the thing down. Man and machine were just hooked together. It was so well designed. It was the most incredible cockpit I've ever seen.

Q: Why did we want the D model then?

General Howell: The D was really important because the D was for air to ground in a high threat environment and you know working into intense triple-A, going in at night, doing multi-mission kind of stuff: fast FAC, tacafaca [slang for TAC-A and FAC-A]. You needed a two seat aircraft for that.

Q: Also as a command and control platform.

General Howell: Yes, like a TACC airborne. So there was a good reason for the D coming around and it being part of it. And you needed two people. I really believe that, it really was just too much for one person to try to maintain SA [situational awareness], fly around, get to places, and then be controlling other people and looking around. That is a tall task for one person. So the D was really important. Now it is shown that it would be a great ECM bird. If the electrics go away, of course the F will be even better because it carries more gas and thus has more range and endurance. And I don't know if the Marines will ever get it since they are trying to acquire the Joint Strike Fighter.

Q: Do you think the Marine Corps should go with the E and F?

General Howell: I think the Joint Strike Fighter is the way to go. If they have it but if it doesn't come around, the F-18 As and Cs are getting awful tired. The Navy kept the Cs the Marines-- barely have any Cs. They are still flying As that have been upgraded. And little by little as the

Navy gets the Es and Fs, the Marines are getting the Cs. But the Marine Corps is in a tough situation funding all that other stuff.

Q: Yes, but they have always been. I mean Marine aviation has always been under the gun.

General Howell: But there was another of Howell's rules that I used to expound: 'It is a lot easier to buy airplanes the Navy is buying than it is to buy airplanes they are not buying.' So the Marine Corps should always remember that. We're always having these wonderful ideas and they are good. But we are an awful small service to be out buying unique aircraft. So if we find one of their aircraft that will do our mission for us, it is a lot easier to get it and maintain it and get the parts for it and all that other stuff. Than it is if we're all off on our own.

Q: Well moving on to NATO. How did you hear about that you were going to be going there?

General Howell: Well in our second session with the Commandant, the second day of "Charm school," we had a five-day Charm school where all the new brigadier general selectees came in to Headquarters Marine Corps. The Commandant came in and told us where we were going to be assigned. And it was really funny because the billets had been plotted out and everybody was wondering what they were going to get. It was funny, everybody wanted to go back out to the fleet and be a deputy wing commander or deputy division commander or get a brigade, you know? That's what everybody wanted to do. "Drax" Williams and I, we both made brigadier at the same time. And I was just laughing and he said, man I've already talk to, I'm trying to think who had second MAW at that time. It was the Harrier guy, a little short-- good guy. But he said, I'm getting to be deputy 2d MAW. I'm going to get back and fly the Harrier. And they go around the room and General Gray [the Commandant] is there, saying, "You're going here, you're going there, you're going there." And then he came to me and of course he had a great opportunity to fuss at me. He said, "Howell, you're a slacker." "Sir?" He said, "You have never had a joint or combined tour and in order for us to make you a brigadier general we have to sign you directly to either a joint or combined position, billet. So you're going to go to Allied Forces Northern Command in Norway, Oslo Norway." I said, "Aww Damn." Everybody laughed, it was really funny.

Q: This was when Goldwater-Nichols was starting to make things much more joint.

What effect did that have?

General Howell: Oh yes. At that time Goldwater Nichols was really kicking in. All these rules that come up for phasing in, we were in those phases. And that was one of those rules that was part of the phases. A year or two later you couldn't even be selected unless you had served in a joint or combined position. So they really got stricter and stricter but at that time there were hardly any billets in the Pentagon and the JCS or the joint commands for Marines. The Army, Navy, and Air Force had taken them all and really the Air Force and Army had grabbed those things early on and they were the main holders of those billets. They wouldn't let them go. So the Marine Corps was having a hard time fighting their way into that and getting people in those positions. Now you see them [in] the J8 and they've got Marines that have made their names there. Just like Spider Nyland and several others-Pete Pace, those guys all established incredible reputations over in the Joint Chiefs on the Joint Staff in those positions. And so the Marines have come a long way. At that time there were hardly any billets. So, I go to Norway. Williams got picked to be the PAO, the Public Affairs Officer. There is a name for it--Director of Communications or something like that. He became public affairs for the Marine Corps. He was so upset.

Q: Not exactly assistant wing commander.

General Howell: It was funny. But that's how I ended up getting that. So we go, we ship out that summer and go to Norway.

Q: What were the living conditions there like?

General Howell: It was wonderful. It was different. A unique part of that that I guess I ought to put for in the record is not only was I assigned to be the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations for the Norway Northern Command but I was also had another designation. I was the senior naval officer in the Allied Forces Northern Command. And so I actually was working, not only did I work for the Commander in Chief of the Allied Forces Northern Command, but I also worked for the Commander US Naval Forces Europe [ComNavEur]. And he was located in London; his headquarters was in London, England. So I actually first had to pay a call, have an in call with him and get guidance from him because ComUS Naval Forces Europe worked under CinCLant and then I went and reported to his three star there. It was a four-star billet. This guy is dual hatted, he is also Commander of the Six Fleet and the US Southern Command down in Italy. So he had both

those hats. And I went in and they had this wonderful building, it was Eisenhower's old headquarters in downtown London on Grosvenor Square, caddy-corner from the US Embassy. It was a beautiful area close to downtown, close to Hyde Park. It's just a wonderful place. And they had apartments upstairs. Anytime we went and visited and they put us in one of their visiting officers apartments and it was just nice. Had stewards coming up and bringing you breakfast on silver trays and it only cost like five bucks a meal or something, I mean just unbelievable. So I would check in with him, report you know for duty and then I headed up to Oslo and initially stayed in a hotel. The NATO Headquarters there rented quarters for all the United States flag officers who were stationed there. They had to meet certain standards for security reasons. They had to make sure they were secure; had a safe house, you know all of that kind of stuff because of counter-terrorism. But they had all of that. And we had this beautiful house in Asker, a suburb of Oslo. It really was beautiful and it was huge. I took Pete Rowe's place. They were living there and so they had to move out. And they were moving out when we got there. So we had to live in a hotel downtown for almost a month while they got out of quarters. And we were waiting for our stuff to come over, we had a shipment of our household goods. But we finally got established in this big house. It had a living room that was so big it had three big bay windows in the one room. I mean it was just large. And it had, I don't know how many, but it was four or five bedrooms and a big family room underneath down in the basement and it was really a nice place. Asker was a nice place. We were up on the side of a hill looking out over a fjord, a little fjord that came off the main fjord that goes up to Oslo. In the wintertime when the trees didn't have leaves, you could see the ferries going up and down on the fjord going into Oslo and back. And it was just really very nice. And we had to have it because of security reasons, I had a driver with a Mercedes sedan that would take me you know on official business, would pick me up in the mornings and take me to work and then bring me home at night. And for any 'official social event they would pick us up and take us places. Norway is very strict on DUI, drinking and driving. If you are stopped by a policeman and they sense alcohol on your breath they arrest you immediately and take you to jail. There is no ticket, no nothing. So it is a good thing to have that driver.

Q: Now did you take your whole family over?

General Howell: Well the family is at home is Janel and me. Missy was in college, my son, Jay, was in California at the time. He had graduated and he was trying to become a professional soccer player and so he was out. After we had been there four or five months and Jay came over to visit and decided to stay.

Q: Do they?

General Howell: Oh yes. And Norwegian men, there is just a tradition of just not paying attention to the women, sort of like Australians. Have you heard about the Aussies, the same thing. So all you got to do is be nice and polite and they'll just fall in love with you, they love you. And so Jay was like a kid in a candy store and he ended up getting a job in a bar downtown as a bouncer and just had a great time and called his cousin, Henry Persons, who had just graduated from Georgia Tech. He came over and so we had these two smelly men living in our house with us the whole time, the both of them.

Q: Sounds like you had plenty of room for them.

General Howell: Had plenty of room. They eat a lot of food though and the reason they could survive over there is because we were there. It is very expensive there. You go to McDonalds, a Big Mac costs 15 bucks. A beer, ten dollars a beer. I mean it is very expensive to live. The command was a British command, it had a four star, general-- Sir Patrick Palmer. The core of the staff was British but you had a very strong element of Brits, Americans, Norwegians, Danes, Germans. And part of the Northern Command went down into Northern Germany, that was part of the command. And so the Air Force US contingent was very significant. The Air Force was sort of the strongest part of it, a little bit of the US Navy and just myself and about five other Marines officers, or less now that I think about it.

Q: So you were the senior US naval officer there?

General Howell: Yes.

Q: Was it unusual to have a Marine in that position instead of a sailor?

General Howell: It had always been traditionally been the way it was. The Navy just sort of gapped that, they didn't try. They had such a strong presence in CINCLANT and London and that's where their emphasis was and so that was OK with them. It was basically a land command. The Navy was certainly in the battle plan to come around and fight up into the North Sea and around into the Arctic Ocean up there. So there were all kinds of war plans there.

Q: What were your duties?

General Howell: I was Assistant Chief Staff for Operations. However it was very unique, the Air Force jealously guarded their command over air operations and so there was a Chief of Staff for Operations with a Norwegian navy admiral, I was his assistant and then there was also a Chief of Staff for Air Operations which was an Air Force two star billet and he had his own staff. The Air Force jealously guarded that Air Force doctrine and their command and control, and all that kind of stuff. The US Air Force had a strong grip on that. My primary duty, I was the commander of the combat operations center. And it was down the middle of a mountain there in Kolses. Kolses was a base that butted up against a significant cliff and hill, which we called a mountain; it was pretty big. And the Germans had put a big tunnel in this thing back during the Second World War. So NATO went in there and expanded it and we had our command post. When you went through the entrance of that thing you had to walk over a hundred meters through a tunnel to get to the front entrance of the thing.

Buried in it and it actually they had the original old excavated command area and then they had another addition that they put on hydraulic springs in case of nuclear attacks that it would be stable enough and so it was quite significant. We had huge rooms in there for the battle staff and for planning and operating a war in the northern area of operations. And of course our main thing was to stop the Russians coming across northern Norway or coming through the Baltic Sea. That was sort of it and also on the ground in north Germany, the north German plains, there were bogs there. That was where our main defense was so it was a big air battle and sea battle, both and we worked that real hard.

Q: Did you have contingency plans already set up?

General Howell: Yes. They were always being worked and there were plans that had been submitted for approval five and eight years ago that were still in work and people say, we're going to do this but nobody had really agreed to it. When Pete Rowe left he told me--the guy, I took his place and he said, you are going to be frustrated as hell. Your first year you are going to try to accomplish a lot of stuff, you're going to see all the stuff I hadn't done and you're going to say, I'm going to take care of that. He said that is exactly what I said when I came here and you're going to find out your main reason for being here is to get along and to make friends and get along and go to parties. And he was right.

Q: So it was a relationship building?

General Howell: It really was. We did have big war games and we participated in them. SHAPE [Supreme Headquarters Allied Forces Europe] had a name for it, I can't remember what it was, Freedom Banner, or something like that; the battle for Europe. We would do that about every other year and we participated in that. SHAPE was divided into three major commands, the European Command, the Allied Forces of Northern Command, and Allied Forces Southern Command, which was Mediterranean, Italy, Greece, Turkey. The Central Command was really US centric. I mean they control it all and ran it all and they had really got into computers by that time, computer simulation for war gaming and all that. We didn't have any of that. We had to fit into their war game and it was interesting. I learned a lot but it was, there was a lot of frustration involved and you had to learn to just swallow hard and just go with the flow.

Q: Desert Storm occurred during this time, what effect did that have where you were?

General Howell: It didn't affect us a whole lot except we had great interest in it. And we offered to help and of course I wanted to get down there and support, join the US forces. And I was told, don't call us we'll call you. Like a lot of other guys that felt very frustrated sitting up there in Norway while all my buddies were down there in the Persian Gulf. Allied Forces Southern Command had some connection because of Israel and all that. That was really hot. The Israelis were being attacked and Southern Command had to be prepared to support them. So we did go down to Italy for a visit. I led a group, I was assigned to lead a group to go down to Allied Forces Southern Command and our purpose was to see what their battle plans were and see where we might supplement them or help them. So we tried to get involved. Nothing came out of it but we really worked it hard trying to help them if they needed help with any kind of staff work or war planning or that kind of stuff. And it was interesting going down there and seeing the way they were set up versus the way we were set up, very different.

Q: I would think they would have all the latest and greatest there.

General Howell: No, not really, not in the NATO Command. Of course the Navy was very powerful; their 6th Fleet and all was in there. But the NATO aspect of it was very similar to us except they had big language problems. You know NATO is supposed to be English primarily

with French backup. Almost every major billet or department was headed by an American with either a Greek, Italian, or Turkish counterpart, a dual hat. And those guys could barely speak English, they had huge language problems.

Q: And you didn't have that there? In Norway.

General Howell: Not at all. Not at all. Norwegians, Danes, Germans, they just spoke great English, they were just wonderful. They were great. Canadians had been very strong up there at one time but you know Canada was pulling out of NATO and so we still had I think one Canadian officer left up there when I was there. But the Gulf War was a major thing that we watched from afar and tracked and then the other thing that my second year there, the wall came down.

Q: Right, the end of the Cold War.

General Howell: That was just an incredible event. Just being there-- the euphoria and watching all that because when I first got there the wall was still there and I got to go over to East Berlin with a group senior US officers, and it was nasty. People watching you and you wondered if somebody was going to shoot you. And going along the border between us up in northern Norway where it touches Russia; and you go up there and the Russians were spying at you across the fence and all that kind of stuff. And down in Germany, I encountered the same thing going along the barriers there and the separation between East and West Germany it was just remarkable. And the East Germans, I mean they were serious as hell. I mean they'd shoot you as well as look at you; the fences and the minefields and all that stuff were there.

Q: And we thought it was going to be there forever.

General Howell: Yes and they just went down. That was just remarkable. When all that was brewing the German officers were getting special intelligence through German national sources. I was getting my best intelligence of what was going on through these German officers. And they were all on top of it because of course they had a great interest in it. So when it all happened they were just euphoric and a lot of them had family and kinfolk that they hadn't seen in 30 years.

So they went across and the stories they brought back were just incredible, how destitute people were. And I knew a wonderful German Navy captain who went and visited the old farm where his older brother had stayed and the house had not been painted in 30 years and they were

just destitute. So the Russians just treated the Germans like crap. His brother was just bitter as heck because he wished he had left, but he was the oldest brother and wanted to stay and hold on to the farm. And so it was really an incredible experience being over there and seeing all that happen. They didn't have any of the problems they encountered with East Germany and people not wanting to work and pulling them down. I mean West Germany was just robust. West Germany was just a great place to travel through. People on the ball, everything neat and clean, anything made out of brass was shiny. People go out in front of their storefronts and sweep the sidewalks everyday. It was just impressive. North and south Germany of course were really different but they are both in their own right were just wonderful places and great places to visit. Good food, very efficient people taking care of business. That has all changed you know with the inclusion of East Germany that has really drove them down. But initially everybody was just as happy as could be.

Q: I would imagine. The German officers had some inkling that something was about to happen? That was a total surprise to our intelligence people, right? But that is all you knew about it, just unofficially.

General Howell: Yes rumors, rumors but those guys, they'd be up in the O Club at noon, all the Germans would be up around speaking German to each other and talking about things. They were really excited. So we were hearing rumors. They were just hearing better rumors.

Q: Nothing official coming through the intelligence community?

General Howell: No, no.

Q: So did that really change your mission or the role?

General Howell: It was really that they were in denial. When I left they were still in denial.

Q: That the Cold War was over?

General Howell: Yes. We still have a function here, we're still going to be here, we're still going to be doing things. I kept thinking, the whole purpose of this place is to stop the Soviets and the Soviets are going away. And I'm still to this day surprised that NATO is still functioning. But all that changed, our big headquarters went away, that has now been moved to England. Allied Forces

Northern Command is in England now. It has been consolidated with several other British commands that were over there. They had different names for these things but they all got combined. It doesn't make sense to have all of these commands. Not worth the price. Kolses belongs to the Norwegians again and the NATO Command now is Brussels, all that has changed dramatically. I am convinced that the US presence in Europe is a good thing. I really believe that they've had a long period of peace in Europe since Second World War than they've had in the 500 years prior and I think it is because of the US presence there. When we pull out, watch out. And we are pulling out so it is going to be interesting to see what comes out of all this.

Q: Yes it will be.

General Howell: But yes I tell you people, European countries, non-Germans are just still scared to death of the Germans, and hate them. Afraid of them and hate them. They don't like the French but they're not afraid of them. And the French don't like anybody, the French still think they own the world. The Brits and the French still spit at each other. Some things just don't change. I went to some social affairs and talking to Belgian fighter guys, the pilots and they tell me how they hate the damn Germans. And Danes too. You know Northern Germany used to be part of Denmark and to this day the Danes are still pissed off because the Germans took that from them. And so I mean that kind of stuff goes on forever.

Q: And it is amazing you know you go to the United States and we have a big Civil War, but yet we're back together. I mean one of the bloodiest wars ever fought and we're reunited and a common identity.

General Howell: Yes. Well I think it took 100 years to do it.

Q: In a way I guess we're not over it.

General Howell: I think we are--in a lot of ways. We've almost gone too far the other way. Really one of the things, personal things to me, a tragedy is the Confederate battle standard. A lot of brave souls fought valiantly under that standard and died and had great courage and loyalty. Yet that banner is now a sign of the Ku Klux Klan and it just really bothers me. It pisses me off. That organization took that battle standard and shamed it. Yet that battle standard-- a lot of brave souls fought valiantly under it for a cause and you know slavery was awful and thank God it's gone but

that really wasn't the main reason most of those guys fought. They were fighting for their home. They thought they had been invaded. They were trying to protect their homes.

Q: That is, I agree with you 100 percent on that. That is a shame. Anything else on NATO, any particular memorable social events, something that stands out?

General Howell: It just was a social event almost every night. It's funny the way it worked you had a dinner, you attended a dinner or some social event reception at least three nights a week, usually four. But it was during the week. On the weekends, nothing. Everybody went and did their own thing on the weekends. That is the way they worked it. And the Headquarters, the Headquarters was run by the Norwegian Army who ran our base. And they were all conscripts there and conscripts only serve a year or a year and a half in the Norwegian Army and so they were very strict on their hours, they were only required to work eight hours a day. So that base did not open until eight o'clock and it closed at 1600. You had to be out of there. And since I was a general officer I got special permission. They would call the duty, I usually didn't leave till about five and I'd get there at seven thirty. I was the first guy there and the last guy there, you know typical Marine. When I wanted to leave I had to call the duty officer and he'd have to call for a guard to come down because the base was shut down to open the gates so that my driver could drive me home and that kind of stuff. You didn't work real hard and then when you would have an exercise then everybody would turn to and they paid overtime to their conscripts to keep the place going.

Q: Union rules.

General Howell: Big time, big union rules. And the Norwegians, the whole country, conscripts came and went but they were allowed to travel on the airlines free when they were on active duty. So on the weekends almost all of the Norwegian airlines were just loaded with conscripts going home for the weekends and what have you. So airlines were heavily subsidized by the government and so they were very well off and very robust with their local airlines. And so that was interesting. It is very socialized place. Heavy taxation, social services, kids are guaranteed an education through college, medical care, universal medical care. If you don't mind waiting in line a couple of days. Janel had kidney stones. She had had them all her life and she had a kidney attack when we were there. She was curled up in a ball she was in such intense pain. I carried her in to this local hospital and they say OK put her in that room. I put her in that room. And a doctor

sticks his head in and says oh looks like a kidney stone. Yes it is, we need help. Well we'll be back, two hours later nobody. And Janel she's about to die she hurts so bad. And I go search and find a doctor and he said, well we want to see maybe she'll pass it. So we don't have to give her any medicine. They were going to wait a couple of days before they really treated the symptom. So I went right back to my boss and we got orders for a medevac and took her down to Wiesbaden with a big Army hospital there. So we flew in there and took her to the Army hospital and they took good care of her. And we started using that as our regular care.

You had to go to conferences down in Brussels and they had a NATO school in Oberammergau which is down in southern Germany in Bavaria in the mountains. Ski resorts and all that so good business down there. I actually lectured at a couple of courses they had down there about modern command. But then I'd parlay that into road trips throughout Germany and take leave when I do that and so it was a great, I had never been to Europe and so it was a wonderful experience for us to travel. Janel and I traveled. We'd take a ferry, get the car and put it on the ferry there in Oslo and go across the Skagarak, which was you know the Baltic Sea there down to Kiel. An overnight trip, a nice ferry trip and then head south on the Autobahn and we'll sail along 85, 90 miles an hour and be passed continuously by Mercedes. And really saw the country, got to see Germany and Austria, got into Switzerland, spent time in France and Belgium. So it was just great. A wonderful experience.

Q: So you got some good evaluations coming out of there from your Commanders. I noticed the one on the bottom of one of them, General Mundy had written, "A strong performer in any assignment."

General Howell: Really? That's nice. I guess I should go look at my fitreps, I haven't looked at a fitrep since I was a colonel. Admiral [B.J.] Kipsgaard was a wonderful man. He was a big Norwegian Navy man and very highly educated. He was very cerebral, a quiet, patient man and he loved me and so we got along great. And we used to travel together throughout the command to visit command posts, for operations and just check on things. He would try to feed me schnapps and some of the stuff, smoked herring and such, they ate. I had continuous heartburn, I damn near died.

You're in there with the boys, you know the Danes and Norwegians drink heavy. They're heavy drinkers. So that was a great experience. I did a lot of cross-country skiing. It was just wonderful. Around Oslo they have lighted ski trails for cross country so you can go out and ski all

night long if you can stand the bitter cold and so you'd see a bunch of Americans out there skiing at night and having a great time. I was in great shape, great physical condition.

Q: From the skiing?

General Howell: Skiing. It was just incredible.

Q: Weren't the MPS storage caves in Norway?

General Howell: Yes, an MPS stash up there and it was incredible. In these caves up, I'm trying to remember, right in the middle of Norway, I'm trying to remember the name of the place. And I would have to go up there sometimes and visit and walk them and the Norwegians maintained them for us, maintained the stuff. And there was always a question of, would we ever get it back. Because there was a deal that if there was an attack and the Americans couldn't fall in on it that the Norwegians would be able to use it. And that is one reason they had such great interest in it. Because there was a whole brigade's worth of artillery, trucks, all that, there was some great stuff. Amtracs, supplies, artillery.

Q: I bet it was all Marine Corps stuff.

General Howell: Oh it was Marine. It was a regular pack out, an MPF pack out in the caves. And it was in these caves which were just huge, air conditioned, perfect, kept the same temperature year in year out, dry, no humidity in there. All the caves were lined with some kind of special-- it wasn't plastic but some plastic like liner. As I recall there was four main tunnels in the back there was a huge room that was twice the size of the other ones and it had the make up for a field hospital in there. So it could be converted into a combat field hospital. It had the wherewithal in there, it had the kit, they were waiting for it. And from time to time the quacks would come over there and check it out and set some of it up and try it. It was perfect, it was great.

Q: The kind of place you could walk in and turn the key on one of the Amtracs and it would run.

General Howell: They would drive them out, they had a continuous maintenance process where they would pull them out to a maintenance shed and service them and roll them back in. All that stuff, they had a regular maintenance schedule. Batteries were kept separate but they could put a

battery in and crank them up in a heartbeat. They kept them refrigerated you know. It was first rate.

Q: So the Norwegians did the maintenance?

General Howell: The Norwegians did a great job. They were getting paid a lot of money to do it. There were also several bases along the coast there that actually had hangars in the insides of the mountain with a runway that started in the mountain so the guy could be on the go and come out and take off right outside, right outside of the cave. Basically it was sort of a fast taxi in the mountain. You could start your taxi and be on the runway and off in a heartbeat out of these things. It was pretty impressive. They had a huge cave that a lot of people didn't know about. They had the whole German Baltic fleet had a supply built for them in a cave in Norway in case they got driven out of the Baltic. They had the whole setup hidden in caves right there on the coast of southern Norway that the Germans could fall in on and use and it was all inside of caves and camouflaged and hidden. Nobody knew it was there. You'd go in there and see it and it was just huge--vast room full of the stuff with people in there working on that stuff. All run by the Germans.

Q: In summary, I guess it was quiet a learning experience.

General Howell: I learned a lot. It was an interesting experience. Never a dull moment, I was learning things the whole time I was there and it was a two-year thing, it seemed like it was over before it started. Of course I was really never ready to come home, I was enjoying it very much.

Q: You weren't getting to fly were you?

General Howell: Not a bit. Not a bit.

Q: You're next tour was back at Headquarters Marine Corps.

General Howell: Yes. Well I got passed over for my second star while I was in Norway. So this was about my third pass over in my career. I was up for promotion my first year as a brigadier. That time General Gray called me. I bet he was happy to call me and tell me I didn't make it. He called me and told me that. And he said, 'Sorry,' and I said, "Yes sir I understand,

thank you very much General.” And I wasn't surprised. And I got back, figured I didn't like it but I was surprised I made one star. What the heck? And so be it. Get back to Headquarters and Duane Wills is DCS Aviation and asks ‘Will you be my Deputy?’ “Yes sir, I'd be more than happy to.” And I go to work for him.

Q: Did you get any hints that there was still hope?

General Howell: I got some signals, some very clear signals that people thought I had potential and [Jack] Sheehan was Deputy Manpower at that time and he had pulled me aside and said, “Don't give up the hope. We think you got a future and this place needs you.” And lo and behold that fall after that July, I'm Deputy, DCS for Aviation. I asked General Wills, “I've just flown the F-4, all I know is the F-4, all we have is F-18s. I don't stand a chance unless I fly the F-18.” So he gave me permission to go out to El Toro and I got a CAT-3 [familiarization]. He gave me three weeks and so when I came back I had 37 hours in the F-18 and I had gone through the whole syllabus, just crammed and flew.

Q: All single seat or did you get some two seat?

General Howell: I just fam'd a couple of hops in the two-bagger. Well I guess my first ten to twelve hours went on a, I had one fam hop, then went on a three day cross-country with a guy,[Jinx Brenner] in a F-18B. And we just flew it all over the West Coast. The story there, that was the weekend of the famous Tailhook where everybody got in trouble.

Q: The '91 Tailhook, in October isn't it?

General Howell: Yes. And we flew, we were flying over Nellis we were on our way to Hill [Air Force Base] in Utah. And he said, “Hey General something I haven't told you.” “What's that?” He said, ‘I got a call from Cajun [George Tullos] and Spider [William Nyland] and they say they have reservations for you at a hotel in Las Vegas. We got PPR there and so if you want to just divert out of this cross country, we can land right there in Nellis and go to the hotel and spend the night tonight.’ That was on a Saturday. That Saturday, it started on Friday and we spent the night in Tucson and we were just flying everywhere. Just an instrument cross country, doing instrument approaches, landings and touch and goes. This was right about noon on that day and looking I was thinking—“Wow it would be great to see those guys.” But then I only got one more week, I said,

“How many more legs can we get today?” He said, ‘Well we can probably get two more.’ I said, “Let's keep going.” That is one of the best decisions I've ever made in my life. I would have been marked by that like everybody else.

Q: How was Wills involved in that?

General Howell: Duane Wills went out there and gave a speech and that's the reason he didn't get Assistant Commandant, because he was there. He had his wife with him, didn't have anything to do with any of that and yet he got marked, Secretary of the Navy would not allow him to be Assistant Commandant.

Q: What I wanted to talk with you about was the fallout on that.

General Howell: Well we can talk some more about that. Anyway I did get the F-18 and I did get picked up for a second star. I was basically told signals are right, you're probably going to go down 2d MAW and you're going to get a wing. And so that was great and so I'm working for Wills and I had an office there right by his. I also had an office by Op 05. They had formalized having the Deputy Chief Staff for Aviation also be a Deputy to Op 05, so I spent half my days at the Pentagon, half back there working. What I'd done as Op-50M, but now I'm a one-star and doing that kind of stuff.

Q: What were the big issues at that time?

General Howell: The highlight of that whole time was that same battle royal over the Osprey and F-18, finally getting the F-18 but then the Harrier thing came to a head. The upgrades of the B with the night vision systems and the pods there was almost a scandal because some people had been working in APW, I want to say the guys name was Hunter something. I can't remember what the guys name was. Not the program manager but the desk for the Harrier there, the APW. And they had been dealing with McDonnell-Douglas to buy these new systems but had not gotten approval. They started working around and it came to a head and some people almost got fired over that.

Q: High-level people?

General Howell: High-level people. Duane Wills was livid, called the McDonnell guy on the carpet, took care of the guy there and his ass got chewed. He should have been fired, I don't think he was. He brought in Douglas and a couple of high level McDonnell Douglas guys almost got canned. I was in that meeting and was asked. There were a couple guys who were making a lot of money now, still big shots, and all I had to say-- the guy turned to me and he said, "Beak you say they go, they go." Really it happened. I was so pissed off but that was probably not fair, so I said "No." Let's just straighten this out and keep going. And those guys don't know it, I don't think they'll ever know.

Q: Who asked you that?

General Howell: I believe the President of McDonnell-Douglas.

Q: He said it was your call?

General Howell: Yes, they had two guys there that had been in this thing. Two guys I knew very well, former Marines who were working for McDonnell-Douglas and he said, "I will fire them today all you got to say is they go. If you can't live with them, they're gone." I was so pissed off about the whole thing that they put Duane Wills in that position, plus the Harrier itself. I said, "Nah, let's just fix it and go on." That is just another one of those stories but it's true. And we got through that and I got selected and I just can't wait to go but I'm doing all I can to help General Wills.

Q: On Tailhook?

General Howell: We had some sessions with the Navy that we actually went over and of course the Navy is all wrapped up Tailhook in covering their ass. Trying to say it wasn't me, it wasn't me. The Secretary of the Navy was involved, the CNO was involved.

Q: [Frank] Kelso.

General Howell: Yes all and some of them, I think Kelso was lily white. He just got screwed. But the Secretary of the Navy was actually in there drinking shooters out of women's navels, and they tried to cover for him and all that and he had to end up going. But [VAdm R.M.] Dunleavy, he had

been right in the middle of all that. Op 05, he was Op 05. He and his guys, admirals were all, man they were just running around. They were at Tailhook were wrapped up in it and he was trying to cover for his guys and protect everybody and it was just going south. It didn't really go totally south until I was gone. I think all that, it took another year or so to have all that come out.

Q: To have the investigation.

General Howell: Yes, all that kind of stuff. It was a mess. So that was going on at that time. And I also was the interim IG, I was assigned as a secondary, the fellow who had been the Marine Corps IG retired sort of unannounced and so they made me an interim Inspector General for the Marine Corps. So I had that billet, too, and I used to spend quite a bit of time up with those guys reviewing cases and seeing what the workload was and all that. That is when I discovered that the IG really worked for the Secretary of the Navy, doesn't work for a Commandant. But the Commandant had great interest in that so you were really, that is a tough position to be in to be a loyal Marine to your Commandant but you're really working for the Secretary of the Navy and there are certain things you're not supposed to tell the Commandant and that was bad because the Commandant wants to know. And so I didn't like that at all, I didn't like that position. I was so happy to get out of that. I think I only had it for three or four months but that seemed like eternity. But got out OK and I cannot ever say enough for General Wills.

Another story I guess on that. We had a meeting. The Navy, and every time I was at Headquarters the Navy would have eleventh hour final budget meetings and they'd forget to ask the Marines to come join them. And they would make decisions that would effect the Marine Corps. And they did one of these and it had something to do with F-18s, they cut out F-18s and put in money for F-14. Something, I can't remember exactly what happened but we went to a big 'come to Jesus' with Dunleavy and those guys and a meeting with admirals over in Op 05s office and sat down and these guys started briefing. It was a budget, it was a final budget briefing and they started briefing and they came up with some numbers and some decisions that Wills had not been a party of or me and I was his Deputy. And I had an office right there and we didn't know anything, this came out of the blue. And Wills turned to him and said, 'You didn't ask me about any of that.' 'Yes I'm sure we did.' 'No you didn't.' 'Well, we just got to get on with this.' Wills stood up and walked out. I mean totally, I mean Dunleavy was just beside himself. He said, 'don't you leave, don't you leave!' Wills just left and went back to Headquarters. And so Dunleavy ends up apologizing and we re-met and all that but that was a great moment in sports. That Wills just walked. And so I really respected him. Wills was a tough hombre and a good guy.

Q: Yes, and he took it on the chin for Tailhook, didn't he?

General Howell: Yes he did.

Q: What was the fallout for him?

General Howell: He was three star. I don't know. He might have had to retire because of that. This was something I do know, that he never was paid as a two star. He went from one star, was selected for two and before he actually was frocked and then picked up three before he ever got paid as a two. I think. And so in my mind that might have been part of it. I don't know if he was a three star long enough that when it came time for retirement, might have reverted back to two stars, I don't know how it works.

Q: It was a whole ugly episode.

General Howell: Oh it was awful.

Q: What do you think is the overall significance, fallout of that for naval and Marine aviation?

General Howell: It was awful. It gave a lot of people an opportunity to take some shots and get chunks of aviation that they couldn't touch before. And the Navy had always been in this--carrier air to that day was still a powerhouse and little by little the nuke guys, nuke and subs had gotten more and more powerful and that is when they got the edge. That is basically when aviation took a hit and they actually reorganized. CNO's whole office reorganized, and it moved Op 05 down a notch, where he didn't report to CNO anymore; I think he reported to somebody else. It was really changed, of course Tailhook wasn't the only reason they did that but it gave them an opportunity to enforce some things they had been planning to do all along.

Q: Do you think it accelerated the movement of the women into positions in the military that they wouldn't have had before? I mean the feminists really used that for leverage.

General Howell: I think so.

Q: They really politicized that.

General Howell: Yes. The gal that started all of that she should never have been treated the way she was treated.

Q: Oh the admiral's aide?

General Howell: Yes. But at the same time she sort of offered herself. She got right in the middle of that, knew what she was getting into but then when it happened--there's no excuse for the conduct that went off. There is no excuse for that. At the same time the way it was reported by some people who had been having a great time and were right in the middle of it enjoying all that revelry until somebody insulted them, that sort of bugs you a little bit. The hypocrisy of the whole thing was really bad. But it really showed that Naval aviation including the Marine aviation had gotten way too far carried away with locker room activity outside the locker room. So it had to happen. We were doing things we shouldn't be doing.

Q: Did you notice a change in Headquarters Marine Corps with General Mundy as Commandant?

General Howell: Oh yes. We had a real gentleman, level headed, listened to people, didn't try to bully people. He had what he wanted to do, he knew he had a vision and all that but he was more traditional gentleman scholar, soldier, leader. I was very impressed with the way he conducted himself and conducted Headquarters. There was just a whole sort of relief and people working hard but much more collegiate and collegial atmosphere at the Headquarters. At the same time he started sort of the move of Marines going with TacAir [tactical air] aboard ship with the Navy. And that troubled me greatly.

Q: That was '92, wasn't it?

General Howell: Yes. I was there as the Deputy when that decision was made. It was funny, [General John] Dailey was out of town, he was the ACMC. You know Mundy used him as a sounding board for all that kind of stuff and Dailey was I think in WestPac and somebody from the Navy got Mundy cajoled in this with the Secretary, CNO and some others into making this deal. And when General Wills came in and told me I just almost fell out of my desk, and I said, "We

can't do that, we've got to fight.” He said, ‘Come with me that is the way I think too.’ Duane and I had been in aviation, like I had been there forever and all my billets had been there and I knew all the history of all that. And you had Dailey and Fitch and all those guys they had fought that. So I go running down to the Commandant's office and I just said, “Sir, we cannot do this and here is why and once you start this we are screwed, we don't have enough squadrons as it is.” Part of the deal was the Navy said they were going to give up two squadrons and the Marines were going to go with four squadrons aboard ships. What General [Mundy] didn't know, there was nobody in those squadrons.

Q: The Navy squadrons they were going to give up?

General Howell: Yes, yes. They had no personnel assigned to those squadrons that they were giving up. They were shadow squadrons that were waiting to form up for another carrier. But there was nobody in them so when they gave them up they didn't give up anything.

Q: They didn't lose a thing.

General Howell: They didn't lose a thing, except the potential for those squadrons. And yet we turned over combat ready squadrons to the Navy. And I just said this is a trick. And he sort of got flushed in the face and said, “Settle down General.” And then we talked about. He said, “I've made a decision, I've agreed to this, we're going to do this, carry on.” “Aye, aye sir.” So we leave. Oh my God. So I get my guys together, we got Plans and Programs, we start making the plans and start calling the different wings and talking to them and how are we going to do this. Everybody was just “Oh my God!” And we were supporting UDP [unit deployment program] and all that and we had to change all that. It was a mess. But we did it. Dailey comes back to town in about two days. I'll say something for my Commandant. He walked into my office about a week later and closed the door. I pop up to attention, “Sir!” It's the first time he had been in my little office. He said, ‘Beak, this deal with the Navy. We're doing this anyway.’ He said, ‘I just want to let you know I think I screwed the pooch on this one.’ And he said, ‘Didn't I?’ I said, “Commandant, we will make it work. We will make it work.” He walked back out.

So he admitted that maybe he had made a hasty decision. But as it has evolved the people with a different outlook than mine realized looking at the budget, looking how everything cost, looking at the way the world is going that the Marine Corps, that our tactical air is jeopardized if we don't fall in with other people. I think that is their main rational that if we don't play ball with

the Navy we could end up having all our F-18s taken away from us, period. In my book, the minute you go aboard ship, they're taken away from you anyway. But they're saying they're working deals with the Navy's plan and close air support and all that. That is still to be determined. You know I left the Marine Corps, we were fighting that and watching that grow all the way through and out of the Marine Corps. One of my best friends and like a brother is the Assistant Commandant but he made more dramatic decisions. I won't say we argued, but we had very hot debates about this and finally between the two of us as friends we decided let's never talk about this again. You and I can never agree about this and we're both emotional about it so let's just don't talk about it anymore. So Spider and I we don't talk about that. That is just nothing, something that never enters our conversation.

Q: Someone had told me and I don't know, this is not official, but someone told me that he didn't want to give them ten.

General Howell: No he didn't.

Q: He wanted to give them six. Or just move two more than they already had.

General Howell: Yes. He is a good Marine. He was given a lawful and direct order by a Commandant of the Marine Corps to do it. But he would never tell me that. Spider is loyal to his boss and he was loyal to his boss. I think he was more than happy to retire when he did. That was a tough, tough position for him to be in.

Q: That was a tough challenge.

General Howell: Oh it is. I tell you well the two positions I don't say I hated but I had less fun in was as a squadron XO and as DCS, Assistant, DCS Air. Anytime you were an assistant or a deputy it is tough. It is a lot more fun being the man.

Q: Did you notice much of a difference between General Mundy's support for aviation as compared to General Gray's?

General Howell: No. I think both of them as a Commandant of the Marine Corps supported, institutionally supported, Marine Corps aviation. They both realized the importance. As

individuals though there was an obvious difference, General Gray had a disdain towards aviators, particularly fixed wing aviators. It was a personal thing. And General Mundy was very fair and open and very gracious and fun and you know a good friend as well as a mentor to me. He did not seem to hold this animosity toward aviators. I mean it was obvious with Gray he just didn't like being around aviators.

So there was, it was just a personal and a personality thing. As a Commandant of the Marine Corps I am not aware of General Gray doing anything to jeopardize Marine air. Except I'll say this on the battle for manpower--that was very crucial. When all was said and done somehow the Marine Corps managed to hold on to most of their manpower. But there were cuts made as you recall and [Tom] Wilkerson ran that study. That was later on. Gray managed to hold on but later we had to make those cuts.

Q: After the Gulf War.

General Howell: Yes, after the Gulf War and that was serious business. But it was already, they were already talking about it you know back before that time. So be it.

Q: Well that is one obvious result of the Gulf War. Were there any others that had a direct impact on Marine aviation? This is maybe more in your time as 2d Wing. But did you start to see it when you are up at DCS Air that there were going to be big cuts?

General Howell: No, didn't sense that. There was a lot of optimism at that time and we were still in a euphoria with the post Gulf War. We still had a lot of people over there, hadn't really come to grips with what was going to come afterwards. And so from me, from the best of my knowledge when I was Deputy, DCS Aviation, that short time at Headquarters, I didn't have any indication that we were going to take big cuts or anything like that. That hadn't come up yet. That didn't really come up until I had been 2d MAW a year or so and all of a sudden we had to come up with these. So it took a couple years for all that to manifest itself.

Q: Marine Air, you were getting the feeling that Marine air had really done a good job.

General Howell: Oh they had done a great job. The biggest problem we had was they had just flown them and flown them and flown them and all the support had gone from both CONUS wings had gone to the Persian Gulf. Rich Hearney was given the awful job of having to support all that

from Cherry Point and not getting in the action himself. And he got all that back and it was all just worn out and the people were worn out too. And he inherited that and had to deal with that when I got down there to be 2d MAW. It was a tough situation.

Q: OK well and then you picked up that second star?

General Howell: Yes. And had a great moment because General Mundy pinned them on for me. They had a ceremony but it was funny they played a trick on me. I think that is the only - those ceremonies I had gone to them a lot of times at the Headquarters, the promotion ceremonies. They're always very, they're not solemn but they're very formal affairs, you fill in the Commandant's auditorium there at Headquarters Marine Corps with friends and relatives and people come from all over Headquarters, you know. And you got all the three and two stars up front with your family and the ranks go back as you go back. Usually the Commandant says some words and then swears you in again and presents you and your wife comes up and helps pin on the stars and then they give you your flag which is a big deal. You know flagged officer is a literal thing, they actually give you a flag with your stars on it. And they usually present that to your wife, which is a very nice thing, your wife receives the flag. And so I had done that as a one star; the Assistant Commandant had done that for me when I made one star. And that had been a wonderful thing.

Q: General Dailey did it? He gave you your pin?

General Howell: No it was Joe Went. Yes, he was the guy. He was always very kind to me; he was a nice guy. And he is the guy who pinned them on when I made brigadier, and he was the Assistant Commandant. Well I go up here on the stage, General Dailey's Assistant Commandant is in the crowd. Janel is there, all my children and my brother in law and other family and friends and really a nice affair. And I stand up there and it starts out, 'We're here to promote to Major General Jefferson Davis Howell Jr. and I'd like to say a few words. This is a wonderful occasion because in my mind he has proven himself probably to be one of the finest aviators in the Marine Corps and probably the best brigadier General we ever had in the Marine Corps and has worked harder and had better results probably than anybody.' And I'm listening and I'm started to blush and I'm wondering what the hell is going on. I mean he is saying that I walk on water. And I'm wondering what is the punch line? And then all of a sudden Dailey stands up and says. 'Sir, sir, I hate to interrupt.' 'What are you talking about?' 'I must interrupt.' 'What do you want General Dailey?'

He said, 'I have to protest what you're saying.' 'Well what do you mean?' He said, 'I hate to say that in front of this crowd but I have evidence that this officer has not really lived up to being General officer, has really brought great shame on the Marine Corps with his conduct and his appearance.' And he said, 'Really? Well can you present that evidence?' 'Yes, I do I have it on tape.' And so, 'Well let's see this.' And they darken the lights and they show the video of this Blues Brothers thing and there I am playing the guitar. And he says, 'See look at his haircut.' I had a beard and all that kind of stuff. So they made a big joke out of it and it was just hilarious.

Q: That blemish on your career, that Blues Brothers thing.

General Howell: That was funny. They got a big laugh out of that. But that was special.

Q: So that's on tape?

General Howell: Oh yes. Oh big time. We got several copies of the video. It's been shown all over the world. So that was neat but I go down to Cherry Point and check in and then we have a change of command in May and so that was great getting down there in May. And I had a chance that Spring to get a couple of hops with 2d MAF F-18 squadrons. I had driven down there and they let me fly a little bit.

Q: Anything particularly memorable about the change of command?

General Howell: It was wonderful. Well Rich [Hearney] treated me graciously. He gave me a great turnover. Was very gracious, the troops looked great, they really did a superb job and it was a nice affair. And I had a bunch of friends from all over came down to that thing, we had a great party. That afternoon and it went into the next day at our quarters there at the river and so we just had a grand time. And as I recall Janel, she'll kill me for not remembering, as I recall they had to do some re-doing to Hearney's house, and so we moved in next door temporarily in the house next door for about a month while they worked on them. We moved into the quarters. It had a beautiful backyard, those quarters were just really nice. So it was first class. And the Marines looked good and I guess one thing that did happen, the band always asked you what your favorite song was so they can play as the parade is over, you know? And they played some things for Hearney but then they played "The Eyes of Texas" and a bunch of my Texas friends, old Longhorns, stand up. They stand up for that. And one of them told me later, a buddy of mine named Danny Traber, who was

there, he was my close childhood friend, like a brother to me. He comes, and he said, 'It was really funny; there was a Marine behind me who said, 'It's funny, civilians they don't know when to stand up or sit down. They're standing up for 'I Been Working on the Railroad.'”(laughter)

It was just a great beginning and we went to work. Hearney had set up a really modern headquarters, using the computer like nobody used it before for reporting systems and daily to daily aircraft reports were all on the computer you know. So I inherited some great stuff that he had set up there. And we got to work and our main function of course was providing forces for UDP, both helicopter and fixed wing, providing forces for the floats to the Mediterranean. And we were also periodically floating a MEB, or a Marine Expeditionary Brigade, MEB over to WestPac too from time to time. So it was a lot of work and then trying to recover from the war. And they were already in the recovery stage.

Q: The whole MAW was?

General Howell: Yes the whole MAW. And people were turning to.

Q: Maintenance related stuff mainly? Aircraft maintenance?

General Howell: Yes it was but it had a great group of leaders.

Q: You had quite a supporting cast there future general officers during that time and of course your Assistant Wing Commander was Spider.

General Howell: Yes he came in.

Q: Also [Bob] “Rooster” Schmdle had VMFA-251, [Robert] “Dog” Maddocks he was G-3 and then became MAG 31, Jim Amos had VMFA-312, Marty Post had VMFA(AW)-533, and John Graham had VMFA-115

General Howell: Yes John was there. Earl Hailston was the three then took MAG-31. Mike Olsen had one of the helicopter groups and he later on was my Chief of Staff out at MarForPac. He was just great, great guy. We really had some great people and there was some other guys, some helicopter guys who made General officer who were over at New River. Dave Richwine had the

base, and then he left and “Assassin” Fred McCorckle, came in. So I mean we had some great, great guys there.

Q: Interesting Vietnam experiences.

General Howell: To this day up on the wall he's got framed a bunch of beat up old watches and rings and he took off of dead VC that he bragged about. He would run out of ammunitions and he would land the helicopter then go chasing after him with his 45 and stuff. Fred, he flew something like 3,000 hours. I mean he made a hell of a reputation for himself in Vietnam. He was quite a guy, quite a guy. Still is quite a guy.

Q: You were talking about the personnel, your people that you had working for you, your subordinates--the condition of the MAW.

General Howell: We were rebuilding and I'm glad to say that we did a good job. We got things, people going again and had good support and we got the supply flow. Personnel was a big problem you know the Marines had come back. It is always a trial taking Marines that had been over the Persian Gulf all the time and putting them out on a float or putting them on a UDP. Marines came through like the champs that they are. Morale was threatened by that. And so we tried our best to really get a lot of family support going and help and my wife was really involved with that. Our chaplains, and our quacks [doctors]. Cherry Point is a big spread out place and there were factors there that didn't have to be there that affected morale. A Marine who was sick or needed a sick bay had to travel miles and he might not have his own vehicle to go just see a doctor. One thing our wing surgeon did, he set up a dispensary on the flight line. So the Marines would just go right to the flight line dispensary. You know that kind of stuff.

It really paid off. It really paid off. And so we got the Key Volunteers going and I had a personal interest in it. I used to go to all their graduations and thank them for what you're doing. And you know it's funny, if you get the wives liking what you're doing, the guys find it a lot more acceptable. They don't come home to someone who is upset and bitching about it. So that had something to do with it too. Amos with VMFA-312 was the first Marine F-18 squadron to be assigned to a CAG [carrier air group] and to go aboard ship. And he did an incredible job.

Q: What is the implications in that? I mean Marines have always been on carriers.

Marine F-18 or F-4 squadrons are always assigned to go aboard ship, historically, that's not

unusual, but what was different about this, tactical air integration [TAI] that is occurring at this time?

General Howell: Marines had always been an addition. But knowing they really belonged to you, the minute you become part of a CAG, part of a normal workup and everything, I mean he belonged to the CAG, he didn't belong to me anymore. And so he was gone a lot.

Q: Taken out of the wing altogether?

General Howell: Yes, the wing and all of our activities and training and all that, the CAG ruled; and I never get to see him again for eight months to a year and a half. And so at that time because of UDP, that takes the squadron away from UDP that we were using. And then we got another squadron working up, and then all of the sudden we got committed to furnishing a squadron in Bosnia for support of the operations in Bosnia. And they were flying out of , Aviano, Italy. I actually went over there and flew with those guys for a couple missions. Those two pictures on the bottom of the wall there are me and an F-18, next to me on the side, on the left there an F-18 flying over Bosnia and those photographs. Flew a couple missions with an F-18D [VMFA(AW)-533] squadron that we had over there. And they were good. Flying out of Aviano; great place and great food. But went over there and visited so we committed a squadron to that and we thought that was going to be for maybe half a year and they might still be doing it, I don't know. But it was going the whole time I was there and it kept going. And so we were really strapped. People were coming and going and that was a tremendous challenge.

Q: You're talking about F-18s sir?

General Howell: Everybody. And the Harriers were just struggling. The aircraft had big maintenance problems, big engine problem, we had Ared-striped@ a bunch of engines, they were having cracks on the intakes. And then we were having a hard time keeping our people trained and getting them trained and ready for deployment; and getting them aboard ship.

Q: Because they had to support the MEUs.

General Howell: Had to go to the Med, to the Persian Gulf and were supposed to go to UDP. The West Coast was having the same problems. When I got there, there was a big tug of war between

east and west coast, who is going to do this, you know. It's your turn, no it's your turn. We can't do it, no we can't do it. So I got with my counterpart on the west coast and said, "Hey let's work together."

Q: That would be CG of the 3d MAW?

General Howell: Yes. So I think it was [Paul] Fratarcangelo, I think. And so we basically sat down and agreed to help each other and we actually traded airplanes. It was not an easy thing to do, but we actually traded birds and actually combined some squadrons to go deploy together to make it and it worked. It took some pressure off some people because it made sense. But it was never easy. It was never easy.

Q: And the same time this was when the cuts were starting to come in--the draw down, right?

General Howell: Yes. But the cuts are going to be next year and the year after. So I didn't really suffer that. I just suffered through the planning for it. But it was, you saw it coming and it was very scary. Another factor, another sort of unusual thing it crossed my mind and then you asked me about the cuts. What was it? There was another...

Q: Operation?

General Howell: Well we had a lot of those too. And we had General [William] Keys. Bill Keys. Great guy, great leader.

Q: What sort of relationship did you have with him?

General Howell: Oh he was the best, we just got along great.

Q: How did he want to use the wing? Did he set a direction for you?

General Howell: No.

Q: He's in your chain of command though, right?

General Howell: Oh he was my boss. And he protected me by the way. General Hearney became DCS for Aviation and then became Assistant Commandant and because we had differences about the Harrier and that kind of thing, I think that General Keys sort of protected me from him. I found out later on that there was some recommendations made, maybe he should replace me or something and I had never heard of that and it never happened because Bill Keys said I was his guy and he stuck by me. And so I love him, I love him to this day. He was a great supporter of me. Every time I ever called him and asked him for anything he said, "OK, don't screw it up." He backed me up all the way. At the same time he was sort of a pain because you know he was tired. He had been in that war and led that [2d Marine] Division in that war and he comes back and now we have all these exercises that command post exercises and we were part of east coast combined exercises. Half the time he would say, "Hey I can't make it, you got the MEF."

We'd have our Wing headquarters over at Bogue, and ready to go. I mean straight up great operating. I'd have to go over to the damn MEF headquarters and run the MEF. It wasn't like, I mean we had a good command post that we put together with a bunch of trailers and it was really good with consoles and everything was wired together. And old MEF headquarters was like Guadalcanal, a bunch of tents spread all over the place, you know, 'I say again and do you read?' But I did it. And so I served as his MEF Commander in several big exercises there. It was an honor but it still sort of pissed me off that I had to do that. But he was just a great guy.

Q: Did you have any good ideas about how to use aviation and ground or was that even part of it? Is that sort of just doctrine?

General Howell: It was doctrine. I think because of the war and the way it hammered out, it was a battle royal there between naval air which included Marine air and Air Force command and control that just went on the whole time. And we ended up holding them all, [Mike] "Lancer" Sullivan did a great job had to appear before Congress and everything to protect Marine aviation.

Q: During the Gulf War?

General Howell: I think it was right before. I can't remember the time frame but that was a battle royal going on during that period and so it sort of cooled off afterward. We hit a truce at that time. So it didn't raise its ugly head we just worked together. We just worked together and sort of played by the rules that were doctrine and didn't try anything different. Didn't push but at the same time the Air Force didn't press us.

Q: These were joint exercises that you were doing.

General Howell: Yes. So the allocation of resources was always the same. The Air Force would always be the tactical air commander, the JFACC [joint forces air component commander], but they always wanted all of our sorties and we say no we will commit a certain amount to the MEF support and you get the rest. And they didn't fight us on that. They didn't like it but they didn't fight us. And so it was just a truce at the time. We got to protect our forces, they got most of the sorties; it was all a war game anyway. It wasn't that big of a deal. I tell you those two years went so quick it was just busy. I enjoyed it, flew a lot. Got to fly over 300 hours in the F-18, got to fly every airplane in the wing and so that was really a hoot. Oh I know what I was going to tell you. Another sort of a key change that was made, the VMAQ had been one squadron. We split it into three squadrons.

We found out that the morale was just horrible among the air crews and the officers because there was no future, you know. You only had one CO, one organization with one CO. You just don't have a prayer and so by divvying it up into three, now you've got three COs and their staff so it really upped the morale of the officers to be given command billets and what have you and it really made us more flexible in assigning them to support activities. We also broke up some clicks and some shady deals that were going on. That squadron had a coffee mess with something like five or six thousand dollars in it that they were using for all kinds of non-regulation activities. They were going to air shows and selling stuff and everything and collecting money and they were, I mean, they were building an empire just illegal as hell. And so by breaking it up we broke up a lot of that. But there were some scandals that some people got in trouble and had to have office hours and all that.

Q: What a unique outfit, the EA-6B is very important—a national asset.

General Howell: Oh yes, its definitely was a national asset. And if we hadn't had kept it then maybe we would have been in a lot of trouble and so would the Air Force. I did not know until later on an F-111 doesn't really have pods, it's all wired into the belly of that thing and so in order to change any system they got to rewire it. Mod the aircraft whereas the EA-6B you just throw pods on and off. It is so much more flexible and so much better to use. So it really saved everybody's bacon in both of those wars.

Q: The Marine Corps has got a long tradition of being sort of pioneers in electronic warfare.

General Howell: They do. Those guys are good and they do great work and they deserve all the recognition they get and they should be getting probably more. And it was just dazzling to me as the Wing commander to go down to their spaces and their hangars and seeing the stuff that they had piled up--these pods and talking to the maintenance personnel and avionics guys. These guys are Generaliuses. They are not rocket scientists but they are very close. They're physicists, I mean these guys they really are good at what they do and it is very unique.

Q: That is a big story in itself for aviation.

General Howell: It really is. And the [C] 130s you know; those are a special group of guys and they were humble because of the war they had just flown and those airplanes were really tired. And we had the Reserves up in New York with brand new C-130Js or whatever the heck they were and we were flying the older birds that were just worn out. And couldn't touch the Reserves because of politics and that was tough. I did everything I could to support those guys and help them. They were great, they were some great guys.

Q: They just don't have much political clout, the Marine Corps do they? I mean you never hear about a C-130 guy making general hardly.

General Howell: No.

Q: That's interesting. I wonder just because it is a small community or is there a bias somewhere?

General Howell: Both. All the way from flight training, the last thing most guys choose is multi-engine and so those are the guys that probably were in the bottom of their class in flight training. And so that is part of it.

Q: Or if they do choose it they're looking to get out and fly with the airlines.

General Howell: That's right, there's that kind of attitude that people have toward them. I tell you about the 130s, those guys saved our bacon so many times and I can't tell you how many times that tanker kept me out of trouble. And the TransPacs when we had [VMFA] 212. I just have a great admiration for 130s and the guys that fly them I just think they're great and they do great stuff. And they did a great job for me at Cherry Point. They were good people. The whole thing was truly a struggle on combat readiness and you know aircraft readiness and I'm proud to say they just got stronger and stronger and better and better the whole time I was there. I was very pleased with that.

Q: Towards the '94 there were reporting 95.8 percent readiness rate. That says a lot just coming out of the Gulf War.

General Howell: Yes. We worked real hard and once more my Wing Maintenance Officer and my staff and sort of had the same philosophy. I said this Wing is not here to bully and push around our groups and squadrons. They know what they need, let's support them and help them succeed. That was our attitude, that's all.

Q: Kind of like you took with as a group commander.

General Howell: Yes. I think it paid off. I think people really appreciate when you let them do their job and you try to support them instead of trying to tell them how to suck eggs.

Q: Regarding command relationships with ground units. What is the relationship between a Wing commander and a division say the 2d Marine Division Commander?

General Howell: We are colleagues and counterparts under the MEF Commander.

Q: You're co-equal--the division commander can't say, "Hey we're doing this ground exercise give us some airplanes."

General Howell: No.

Q: They'd have to ask through the II MEF?

General Howell: Well you can come ask me.

Q: They can't order it-- that is a misconception that people have outside the Marine Corps that aviation belongs to the ground commander.

General Howell: No, no we belong to the MEF commander and so I was his component commander and so I decided where the aviation was going to be and support. At the same time I told him the division commander whatever you ask for I'll give you.

Q: It was [Richard] "Butch" Neal, right?

General Howell: Right. Great American, great guy. Every time we'd get together he'd smack me in the chest. Of course that was where his head was. But he was a little fighter, he was a great guy. I'll tell you story. I was the senior two star in that MEF, so when we had a change of command when Keys left right before I left. He [Keys] made me be the commander of troops and I tell you a lot of the people, the grunts went nuts. They could not believe that. Of course they didn't know I had been an infantry officer and so I knew how to handle myself but they didn't know that initially. And we had this huge MEF formation. I mean we had the division there, the wing there, the FSSG and force recon. I mean it was a huge formation, we had over 2,000 men in formation.

It was at Lejeune out on the grass. Airplanes, static displays, thousands of people, it was hotter than hell. But we had practiced. We had a couple practices, I got with the MEF sergeant major and the division sergeant major, they were running the thing. We worked together and we did 'officers center', we didn't just do it with the file commanders, we actually had 250 officers. I mean it was a thing of beauty. It was a thing that could have been a disaster but we worked it and worked it. The way we did it, of course, we used loud speakers and had head mikes. And that was working pretty good. When they come forward and halted, I gave them the commands of 'About face' and 'Post March'. Butch Neal was the guy who gave the command 'Officers halt' when they came forward. When that command is given, you've got to do it on the right foot in order for the Guides to bring their staffs down correctly. And Neal had been practicing but he screwed it up every damn time. And he was starting to get really concerned and upset and the sergeant major came up to me and said, 'Sir, we got to get somebody else to give that command because he is just not giving it on the right foot.' I said, "Don't-- he will come through don't worry." I wasn't going to take that away from him even though I was concerned. And by God you know on record day he did it perfectly. I mean it really was a great, great ceremony. I was very proud of those guys. It

was a fitting tribute to General Keys and an excellent parade and a huge number of people that marched that day. I was really proud of that moment.

Q: It was a really good working relationship. Was [Paul] Van Riper in that too?

General Howell: Yes Van Riper. He was the division commander when I got there and Neal took his place. That was a happy moment. Van Riper was a very competent officer but not a charismatic officer I guess you would say. He was not that highly liked by his people. I think he was always better as a staff man and a visionary and a staff officer. Neal was a real troop leader. And the troops loved him so he did a great job.

Q: But you said anything I can do aviation wise we're going to do it for you?

General Howell: Yes. If we can't do it I'll let you know it would be impossible, otherwise we're going to do it for you. So we had a great, great relationship and got along very well.

Q: Any disappointments for you as Wing CG?

General Howell: Sorry moment for me of course when Bob Maddocks, we had that incident down at Beaufort and I had to hold office hours on him and that was tough. It was awful and I didn't want to do it. I had a problem. This incident occurred at the [O] Club, they were put on report by someone who observed them and most of the squadron commanders were there and they were just as guilty as him of un-officer like conduct, OK. And we investigated it and I had the sorry decision of should I relieve every commander down there or do I just lean on the top guy. And I just gave him a letter and said, "Continue to march." Sent it up to Keys and of course the word got up to Headquarters and through Headquarters pressure and Keys agreed, he said, 'He's got to go.' So he comes down in a C-12, picks me up in Cherry Point and we go down to Beaufort and the three of us meet together and we relieved Bob. That was just a dark, dark cloud over my whole command there. At the end of my command, that was only two or three months before I was scheduled to leave anyway and that just really hurt.

I love him dearly to this day. Bob was always, we were good friends and we still get along but I know in the back of his mind he still feels I'm partially responsible for what happened to him. I guess he's right but I don't think he realizes I tried my best not to have him relieved. It was ordered from high above. And I found out later that there were people from high above who

thought I should be relieved too for not relieving him on the spot. And Keys kept that from happening, I found that out later; so poor judgment on my part but it was very difficult. I just thought, you know, that Bob was doing a great job as a commander.

Q: He had MAG-31.

General Howell: Yes MAG-31, he did a great job. He was a great leader. Of course within two weeks of that incident he was getting chest pains and finds out he has a massive heart attack and they had to do a triple bypass on him or else he would have died. So in some ways maybe I might have saved his life because he probably might have been up there flying an airplane when that happened, I don't know. It is funny how these things pan out.

Q: He was a great fighter pilot, I know that from [VMFA] 212 days.

General Howell: Yes, he could fly an airplane.

Q: That brings up another issue, about the whole culture of Marine aviation changing, any comments post Tailhook?

General Howell: Yes. That started and we had gotten that word out to all our people that you just can't do that. I had given strict instructions to my commanders, "Times, they have changed." We used to take the locker room antics and take them to the club but it was when it was an all men's thing. I said, "Its not that way anymore. You've got a lot of women there [at the Club] and you just can't treat women shabbily, you got to be a gentleman; and oh by the way, we're supposed to be gentlemen anyway."

Q: They used to have the "fighter bars" off to the side where that was permitted, we had one at Iwakuni.

General Howell: Yes. Yuma had one. But I said those days are over. But see it is funny Bob had not been in the Continental United States for Tailhook and the post-Tailhook. He had been over in the European Command over in Stuttgart in NATO and US Forces Europe, a combined tour so he had missed that, I think he had missed out the significance of what had happened.

Q: The cultural thing.

General Howell: Yes. And he had comes back and he gets his command and Bob being Bob, he's a hell-raiser and a fun loving guy and I don't think he accepted what had transpired. So he suffered for it. He really suffered for it. And it was really a bad incident.

Q: Women were coming into Marine air. How was that going over?

General Howell: I think it was going over fine, the Navy was having all kinds of problems because they were pushing them and trying to get people into positions I think for PR. The decision we made and I'm happy to say that I actually wrote the sort of the first rough draft of the Marine policy on women in aviation when I was at DCS Aviation, that basically you were told you were asked by the Commandant, yes we got to do this, what should we do? And there was a big move to, 'Let's just make women a multi-engine [pilots], you know C-9 and C-130 pilots.' And I went to Duane Wills, I said, "You will destroy the morale of all the men who fly C-130s and C-9s. I mean you can't do that. I think we should make it that women can fly any aircraft in the Marine Corps if they qualify to do it. They had the same qualifications and go through the same schools and pass the same tests as men. And if they can do it, let them fly anything." That was the policy we came out with. So basically in the Marine Corps, if you can hack it as a pilot you'll be a pilot. I've lost touch I don't know how its going now. I don't know how many women are flying in the Corps. We ended up with more women I think flying helicopters and multi-engine than the others but to the best of my knowledge it seems to be paying off.

Q: What role did you have Spider in as assistant wing commander? What were his duties, how did you divide up responsibilities there?

General Howell: He was my chief of staff when I first got there. I didn't have an assistant wing commander and I asked up to Headquarters, am I going to get one? After they sorted through everything, 'No you're not.' And so I made some inquiries and I said well is there any rule that says an assistant wing commander has to be a brigadier general? And they said no not really. And so I designated him with the approval of General Keys, to be chief of staff/assistant wing commander. Because I thought he deserved it. And Spider really acted, he was really a chief of staff. His main job was being chief of staff at that air wing because that was a big ass job but he also had the title of assistant wing commander and where he could be used and particularly when

Keys kept grabbing me and making me go take MEF activities. Instead of the chief of staff being the wing commander he was the assistant wing commander so he rightfully became commander and it just made it a lot easier. And he just did a remarkable job. But I think that he would agree that during that period 90 percent of his work was as a chief of staff because it was a big job. And Spider being Spider just did a remarkable job. He worked his ass off, the staff did great work and he ran that staff and all I had to do was sort of act like I wanted something to happen and he made it happen. And a lot of things that happened it was his initiative and he would come in and say, 'Hey boss, what do you think about this?' And I'd say "Heck yeah." They were his ideas. Spider was just always full of good ideas. Worked so hard that nobody could ever complain about him overworking them because he always worked harder than anybody. Always laughing, always upbeat, always wanting to fly and Spider was just a wonderful officer and very capable and it was a great moment to me when he was picked up to BG.

Q: That occurred there?

General Howell: Yes. He was the first RIO to ever be promoted to brigadier general. Oh that was a great moment.

Q: Do you ever pick up any prejudice against NFOs [naval flight officers] among aviators as far as leadership positions?

General Howell: Yes. I'd probably be a bad guy to talk to because I probably had my own prejudice. Natural aviator, you know a pilot. I've observed several NFOs and leadership positions and I have been very critical of most of them. I didn't think they did very well. The trouble is you can be critical of most people in leadership positions. I probably had a bias. But in my experience I have seen a couple that have done great jobs, you know Spider and others were great examples. But I have seen some guys as squadron commanders and in leadership positions and they didn't hack it very well and they were NFOs. So I have observed that, I've heard people complain about it and so there probably is a bias. I am probably one of the guys with that bias, I don't know. But I think it has to do with your role in the airplane puts you in a category and a mindset where how can you take that role and move it to somewhere else without being sort of subservient or dash-2 in whatever you do. I don't know. So I know I probably insulted you.

Q: No.

General Howell: But it is a natural bias.

Q: Well yes I can understand that. I can understand that. So it makes Spider's rise to four star even more remarkable.

General Howell: Remarkable, and there's nobody that can touch him. There's nobody better than him at anything. And there's other RIOs that you can say the same thing about if they were given the chance. But I think just like helicopter pilots, there's a bias in fixed wing toward helicopter pilots. And it starts in flight training where you know you make your initial pre-flight in Saufley Field. If you make the best flight grades then you get to go fixed wing and the helo guys don't. Now there's some helo guys that say I have the best grades, and I wanted to fly helos, so they did. That's fine.

Q: Yes I've talked to guys who said that was their first choice.

General Howell: But as a rule that's not really the way it works. That's not really the way it works.

Q: Everybody wants to fly F-18s.

General Howell: Yes. Remember Steve Pless, Medal of Honor?

Q: Yes.

General Howell: I knew him. Going back, talking about bias and the differences, when Steve was in that helicopter squadron, he was on the Iwo Jima with that squadron that I got to know when I was an infantry officer. We met, and I remembered him and he remembered me because I had actually flown with him on a night flight in an H-34 and he had gone into Vietnam with that squadron, deployed into Vietnam for a while and flew in there and all that. And the next thing I know, I'm in flight training, and he's in Flight-18 at Saufley Field there in VT-1, or whatever it was that had T-34s. So I get through phase one, and Steve, he was one of the guys encouraging me to go flight training, and I had always said I wanted to be a helicopter pilot. The minute I get to Pensacola and I talk to a bunch of other students, and everybody said, 'what do you want to do, what are you going to do?' And I asked the guy well what do you think? And he said, 'Oh man,

you want to go do jets, I mean jets is the thing. You're not a man unless you're a fighter pilot, you know a jet guy.' So I wanted to go jets, I cannot stand to live unless I'm a jet pilot. So I'm now flying and I've done my solo and I'm on either my third or fourth instructor hop in acrobatics. Steve Pless is my instructor. 'Jeff.' "Sir, how are you?" And so we chat, and he was a first lieutenant? Maybe he was a captain by then, he was a captain. And because he had been a MarCad we really, we were almost equal rank. I think he had made captain by that time. We were taxiing out and he said, 'You know, I'm going to go back to Vietnam. I'm going to Vietnam and I'm going to win a Congressional Medal of Honor. I ain't coming back until I do.'

Q: Is that right?

General Howell: Yes he told me that. I swear, and I wasn't the only guy he told that to. But I'll never forget we're in the airplane taxiing out and he said, 'Oh by the way,' he said, 'You're going to go out to Whiting, I hear you're doing pretty good. You're going to Whiting when you leave here?' And I said, "Oh no sir I'm hoping to go to jets." 'Oh really?' I mean he said, 'Oh really? You want to go to jets?' "Yes sir." 'I thought you wanted to go to helicopter?' "Well I changed my mind I want to go to jets." 'Oh, OK.' And we went up on that hop and he just reamed me out. I mean everything I did was wrong, he slammed my head up against the canopy, just put me through the ringer and every time I flew the airplane, he'd say 'I got it, you screwed that, you can't fly!' He was pissed off. And he just ripped me apart and we came back and I mean I didn't do anything right. He just chewed my ass: 'You're so fucked up.' It was just awful. And when we landed I figured well I'm getting a down, he didn't give me a down, he didn't give me bad grades, he didn't give me good grades just sort of gave me an average hop. But it really bothered him that I did that.

Q: Almost betrayed.

General Howell: Yes, he felt betrayed. There were always, and General Pitman to this day, was always defensive of helicopter guys and had sort of a chip on his shoulder against fixed wing guys even though he flew fixed wing for a little while as a junior officer.

Q: What about Fred McCorckle?

General Howell: McCorckle is McCorckle. McCorckle is very confident, he loves helicopters and he loves to bad mouth fixed wing guys and I don't know if that's a inferiority complex or just the

way he is. I think it's just the way he is. I don't know. But Fred has been that way forever. So that is all I know. He treats everybody the same way, with disdain.

Q: How happy were you at the 2d Wing with the aviation safety record?

General Howell: It was great except for the Harrier. We had a great record going and then I tell you I crashed one helicopter and crashed four or five Harriers--the engines kept quitting on them. I had one kid got into uncontrollable flight but mostly it was engine failure and kept punching out of airplanes. So the Harrier destroyed my safety record. We might have lost one F-18, I can't remember, I'm trying to remember.

Q: The record shows in 1992, a 46 crashed, a Huey crashed into trees, a Cobra crashed. This might have been before you came in.

General Howell: I think so.

Q: And then a 53 had a water impact with five fatalities on that thing. That was in '92. I'm not sure exactly when in '92. In '93, a there was a mid air with two Cobras colliding, then in '94 an EA-6B had a bird strike and crashed.

General Howell: Yes, they had to eject.

Q: That's what I'm showing there.

General Howell: You don't show any Harriers?

Q: No.

General Howell: I lost two or three Harriers.

Q: Did you?

General Howell: Yes. And I'm trying to think, Cobras? Maybe I did have that. How soon we forget. So whatever your records say there.

Q: That was in the command chronology.

General Howell: OK but I tell you, given the amount of time we flew, we flew a lot of flight hours, I know I lost at least three or four Harriers while I commanded that wing. And that is not in the command chronology, eh?

Q: I didn't see them there sir.

General Howell: That is interesting.

Q: I had someone doing the research, so maybe she missed it.

General Howell: Yes, she did, because they were falling out of the sky.

Q: I know they don't have the best safety record anyway.

General Howell: No. They have maintenance problems, maybe one of the reasons we didn't lose a lot was because they were all down. But they have good people flying them.

Q: Any thoughts on why they have issues, is it just inherently difficult to fly?

General Howell: We had a lot of helicopter re-treads coming in and flying them. I was very concerned about that. Its a lot of airplane to handle for a guy that hadn't had much fast maneuvering time, and they were having a hard time. The Harrier guys as soon as they had a chance, they got out of the Marine Corps and went to something else.

Q: Did they?

General Howell: Yes they did, most of the guys did not want to stick around.

Q: Pilot retention was tough?

General Howell: Real tough. So we had a big gap. We had squadron commanders and we had lieutenants who didn't have any field grade at all. These guys just did not want to stick around. They did not like the airplanes, didn't trust it. Nobody talks about it, nobody wants to admit it.

Q: Dog's [Bob Maddock's] son is a Harrier pilot.

General Howell: Yes. Did a great job. Of course they started taking the best guy in flight training and sending them to Harriers, didn't give them a choice.

Q: I've heard that the pilots or the guys going through flight school are trying to game their grades so they don't get too high grades.

General Howell: All that stuff is going on. He is a superb pilot, you know he is in test pilot school now. He graduated number one in his class at Edwards, Air Force Test Pilot School. And he now is at China Lake, doing test ops and all that kind of stuff and doing great things. He is really is a really superior officer.

Q: Would you want to talk about some of the real world operations you had going on at that time, Deny Flight, and others. How does that come down the chain of command? Is it just pretty much automatic for deploying stuff there or was it something that was worked?

General Howell: You know as a wing commanding general you find you're really not in the operational decision making for much of anything. You're there to just support whatever is done. Even as a two star. Now see if I would have been on the MEF staff or something, they're in the middle of all the war planning and that kind of stuff. We were really basically applicators. We just applied our forces and reacted and got people ready to go and sent them where they were told to go. Deny Flight, I was excited about it, it was F-18Ds, we had single seat too. It got to be a hassle see I wanted to get in on the action and I didn't realize they were going to stick us with that forever. And you know Schmidle ended up with a big mission there that was on television. A lot of what we did while I was there was flying over there waiting. They had ground guys all over the place and OPs watching from housetops and hilltops and in hidden positions observing. And if they saw a target of opportunity or bad guys doing something then they would bring in the air on top of them. But for a long period of time there was hardly any action at all. We were just flying over there. Most guys stayed close to home except when the weather got bad or at night because when

they started working because tac air was really giving them a hard time. So when I was over there we flew two missions loaded up for bear and just flew around and flew around and talked to a couple guys and then went home. And I think we dumped some ordnance in the ocean to lighten up coming back to Aviano. But it was a lot of just flying, flying. But flying in the operation and checking in and going through, it was a good exercise for our people to be a part of something like that. So we got to work with the coalition; the control of air and how you check in and out with people and we tanked, I plugged, it seemed like we used C-135s. So that was a good work out but it was a lot of frustration. I can tell you a story.

Q: Sure, go ahead.

General Howell: As part of that. In Aviano the Air Force had set up an expeditionary Air Force Expeditionary Field there. Of course they had a nice long concrete runway but they had these wonderful air conditioned, double lined air-conditioned tents sitting on concrete bases for the living quarters and the mess hall and all that. And the Air Force came over, the Tactical Air Command and said, 'We ain't staying here.' They all went and moved into a hotel in downtown out on the road. They're staying at the Hilton. Marine Corps came in and we stayed in those tents and we loved it. It was just high on the hog.

Q: It was right down by the runway.

General Howell: Yes right by the runway and it was just really great. I just thought that was neat. Our Marines, it didn't bother them a bit, they were living the life of Riley.

Q: So morale was pretty good over there?

General Howell: Yes and of course the Air Force withdrew our TAD, our guys got field rations.

Q: Did you have any trouble getting AV-8s into the game there?

General Howell: Nobody wanted it.

Q: Why is that?

General Howell: No, capability. What can you do for me-- you've got a day attack aircraft that can carry if it's going to go more than 500 miles it can only carry two bombs, no time on target. It just was so limited in it's capability it was you know A-4 was more effective as an air-ground airplane than a Harrier. They wanted something that had an air to air capability that had a weapons system where it could bomb at night. The Harrier didn't have any of that at that time.

Q: Now the 2+ came in while you were wing commander, did that help?

General Howell: Well we were just getting them. We were standing up our first squadron when I left and I think we are about half fleshed out with one squadron when I left the command they were just coming in. And they were very pleased with it. What's more it added weight to the aircraft and so-- you ain't going to do any vertical takeoffs with that thing loaded up. Also are you going to be able to make a vertical landing when you got all those infrared detectors and all those detectors and stuff hanging on it. It really made a different airplane. But I'll say this, you take it aboard the ship and they did a great job in Afghanistan. So I've got a bias but what I observe there are most aircraft were down, didn't have much capability, we were saying they could do things they couldn't do and they just really bothered me. So I do have a bias, I've got to admit that to the world. As we speak we know that the Harriers went over to the Persian Gulf and got into that Afghanistan action and did a wonderful job. And so they did show good utility and good use.

Q: Finally did what they had advertised all along.

General Howell: They were not, really highly thought of by anybody as having much of a capability to help you at all except as a day bomber for close air support.

Q: Any comments about that mission that Schmidle got involved with?

General Howell: Well, in bad weather he got called in to hit some bad guys and they did it. And all too often the only time the bad guys came out is when the weather was so crappy down in those hills. I mean that is real mountainous terrain and I mean it is very dangerous trying to fly in there in good weather much less bad and he managed to get out of the clouds with his wingman and work it and hit an Amtrac loaded with people. He nailed them and so that was a big deal because that was a rarity that you would even have the opportunity and he got the job done. I just remember I was really proud of him.

Q: That was [VMFA-] 251 I believe.

General Howell: Yes. I think he was the skipper but I knew he was an excellent pilot but when I got to know him he is brilliant. I did not realize how smart he is. You know he reads a book a week and he just remembers everything. And he is a general now I guess.

Q: Yes, he is working doctrine stuff for the Commandant now, distributed ops.

General Howell: Yes, well he impressed the heck out of me as a lieutenant colonel and I saw him to have great potential. Plus he was a good guy. So that there was nice to see the good guys do well.

Q: Any comments on Somalia? That was winding down I guess.

General Howell: It was winding down, it was frustrating just observing them from where I was and talking to the guys that go in there. Our people did a great job and the commander and the US guys involved and changed the way they did things like all that hard work and just throwing it away because of the way they handled it. They got the locals mad at us you know and against us. When we were there most of the locals liked having the Marines there and working. So we became the bad guys because of the way that was run and that was really a shame. Then we sort of lost our nerve. That was after I was gone. When I was there we had people in there and they were doing good work.

Q: I think one of the MEU's was in there.

General Howell: Yes. [General Anthony] Zinni I think was running that thing. He was a new commander or MEF commander or something. Old "Buck" [Emil] Bedard was over there at that time and he later became my Deputy at MarForPac. We had some great leaders over there and they did some great work.

Q: Any comments on humanitarian operations? Hurricane Andrew relief and Emily?

General Howell: Yes. I tell you FSSG, I'm trying to remember who was the commander, great guy, spent most of his time down in Gitmo, that's when we brought in the Haitians. It was something like that. So FSSG had the big load on that but we provided a lot of support for that (Haiti). The Marines to support and augment them down there and there was a lot of Marines down there and then down in Florida we provided personnel. We were involved supporting them, we didn't run them. So once more my job, they needed help and we sent people and machines and aircraft and the people came through like champions like they always do. It was another guy's operation. I just remember supporting it.

Q: How difficult is that, what does it take out of a wing when that comes up--something that is not planned for?

General Howell: It just means that everybody else has to pick up a bigger load to do everything else that you're having to do that gives you a full days worth of work. Supporting deployments and working up for MEUs and all the equipment and getting all of that ready and all of a sudden you're sent on one of these things and the Marines left behind have to get it done. So our people were working hard. Once more, I cannot say enough for the commanders and their Marines in that wing, the great work they did. And we never did anything to make a splash in the headlines, we were never really in charge of anything but the people, the squadrons going aboard ship, the squadrons going out to MEUs, the squadron deploying on UDPs, squadrons deploying, we had squadrons deploying to 29 Palms continuously, doing work over there, training. There was a big, almost a rebellion among a lot of wing commanders at that time over MAWTS [Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron], 'MAWTS is too big of a drain we got too much going on, we can't do it anymore.' I refused. I would not, I said we were going to support MAWTS, 100 percent; the seed grain for the future of Marine Corps aviation so you must provide the machines and the people to support MAWTS. So we did. I had some people very upset with me, group commanders who said there is no way we can do this and I said yorses way, you got to do it. And I demanded it of them. And so we got it done.

Q: MAWTS and WTI [weapons and tactics instructors] are always in demand.

General Howell: Oh yes. The first guys to go to Desert Storm were all MAWTS grads, went over and started the flying and getting that going. And so those guys were always at the forefront of any really major new thing. They were the guys that would break the ground and get things going

because they are the highly trained experts and probably some of your best pilots too. MAWTS ends up, we've had people at these things going and so I just felt like it was absolutely required that we keep that going. I really believe in that to this day that I think WTI and MAWTS is one of the best thing the Marine Corps ever did for preparing our people for combat.

Q: Do you have any information on the background on that as far as just genesis and how that got started?

General Howell: To the best of my knowledge we had MAWTUPac [Marine Air Weapons Training Unit Pacific] and MAWTULant. These were weapons training units that belonged, one was at El Toro, and one was, I think, at Cherry Point. And the wings put together their best and brightest to run those things. Then we started ACTI, Air Combat Tactics Instructors, they became the guys that trained people to be ACTIs and could be instructors in the squadrons. And there were just some of the best and brightest the Marine Corps has seen. They saw Red Flags what was going on with the Air Force and they said you know the Marine Corps needs to do this too. It is an institution that we need, and the only way we can really pull this off is to get the ground guys involved.

Q: Make for air-ground symbiosis.

General Howell: Yes and if we get their support it'll happen. If we don't get their support we can't make it out. And so that's why they got them in it and the helicopter guys and it became really the first place where the whole Marine Corps came together to work together and combine arms. Fighting in a real very realistic scenario and training people in the machine to go out and fly these missions. And there were some people with great vision. You know you had John Ditto, as much as he was chastised, he was one of these MAWTU guys who got this thing. That's why one of the lecture rooms at MAWTS is the Ditto Room, they named it for him. Howard DeCastro too. He is now the big shot with United Space Alliance, and man, makes a lot of money. Bob Butcher, too. Really first class guy who sort of convinced the leaders-that-be that we needed to do this and got it going. And they have a lot to be proud of because it was a wonderful thing. And the Navy, their "Strike U" [Naval Strike Warfare Training Center], was copied after MAWTS. Randy Brinkley basically held Joe Prueher's hand and helped him organize Strike U. He was the first commander of Strike U. Back in the early '80s and that was Brinkley and "Mini" Mott [Mike Mott] who just

died recently. They helped, they came up from MAWTS and helped Prueher organize the Strike University there at that time.

Q: Prueher was CINCPac when you were there right?

General Howell: Yes and he was the Ambassador to China and now he is making millions of dollars as a consultant I guess. I don't know what the hell. Joe Prueher is good people.

Q: OK sir. We're about through with 2d MAW actually. One other question. There seems to have been a rash of pregnancies in the MAW. There were 15 separations it was noted in the command chronology for pregnancy, a big problem? Female Marines had to be separated from the service because most of them were getting pregnant.

General Howell: Yes. Well they were not married. Were they deployed somewhere out in Aviano or something?

Q: I can't tell from the records.

General Howell: Well they had had the "Love boat" out in the Gulf War. There had been a carrier out there they were young and some of the support ships, a bunch of the sailors got pregnant out there. Well there's a lot of that going on and I'm trying to remember, I guess I was just playing hard ball that if you're going to get pregnant we can't keep you. This is not a welfare organization. So if you can't keep yourself from getting pregnant you can't be a Marine, particularly if you're single. The Marine Corps can't take care of your baby for you. And so you have to get out and go do something else. And now maybe some of them who wanted to get out of the Marine Corps used that. And so be it. But if that was a, I don't remember that in my mind as being a big deal.

Q: Anything else on 2d MAW before we move on?

General Howell: It was just a great experience, I felt honored to have that. We worked really hard at family readiness, it really became a big deal. We had a gal named Phyllis Price there who General [Keith] Smith had hired when he was there and stayed on and really put Cherry Point and 2d MAW way out ahead of everybody in family readiness and supporting deploying units. There were the typical: "It wasn't my idea so I don't like it and she doesn't belong to me so I don't like

her.” It was funded through the base and somehow the base people arranged to have that funding stopped and that became a big issue and we fought that tooth and nail. When I left it still hadn't been resolved. It sort of put a bitter taste on that thing. Had to relieve the MAG commander. After what I thought was really a great experience and the wing had done it's mission well. I left there a little bit not fully satisfied because of those things that went on. That was sort of things that gnawed at me a little bit.

Q: This was the beginning or the continuation of the Key Wives concept, is that what you're speaking of?

General Howell: Yes, it was a training for wives.

Q: And that was coming after General Smith's wife had started it.

General Howell: Yes. And that was the third or fourth wing commander since him and we and Phyllis had been there doing this great work.

Q: What happened to Ms. Price?

General Howell: She had cancer I think. She was either deathly ill or maybe passed away now.

Q: Was she a government employee?

General Howell: I don't know. Janel and she were good friends she could tell you that, I don't know. And maybe I feel guilty because I didn't pay as much attention to it as I should but I had a lot of fish to fry.

Q: That's a big part of it, that's interesting. I guess it's really coming into full bloom in a way.

General Howell: Family readiness is a big deal. Mike Downs who I don't know if I mentioned it on the tape, you know Mike Downs who is running that now was another guy in my Basic Class who made General officer, but Mike's a great guy. He's running it as a civil servant, I'm not sure.

Q: Do you recall General Mundy's visit coming out right after you took over command?

General Howell: He came down there several times while I was there and it was always wonderful having him there. He came to our change of command and he came to other changes of command we'd see him. I'll tell you a story about General Mundy, it was really funny. He had a commanding general's call. It seemed like this was November or December, before my second year there. And it was a great honor going, it was out at Pendleton, as I recall. Had all the commanders, all the general officer commanders plus he came out with some of his senior staff, general officers, and talked about the future of the Marine Corps, let's plan, here's what's going to happen. He starts talking about we're probably going to have cuts, how are we going to do this, what are we going to do and all that. And I remember I got to be exposed to some senior general officers who I really hadn't been around much because you know I had been in Norway as a brigadier and had been at Headquarters for only about eight months and now 2d MAW so it was really great to be exposed to Bob Johnston and some of the other. That was the first time really I had been around [Charles C.] Krulak, much since he had become a big shot and all that. So that was interesting but he pulled me aside, like he did all the generals and said, he was working on the slate and he said, 'Well Jeff, you know you're in your second year of command and you know we got to figure out where you are going to go from here.' So he said, 'Where would you like to go?' And I said, "Well General, you're not asking me what you want me to have, I was hoping you'd ask me what do you want to do. And if that's the case I'd like to either be a MEF commander or the DCS for Aviation, at you know the three star billet." And he said, 'No I'm asking you where you want to go.' And I said, "I guess what you're telling me is I am going to go somewhere else and that will probably be my twilight tour." And he said, 'Where would you like to go?'" So I knew what was going on. He smiled, he was a real gentleman and I said, "Well, if you really ask me and if I'm going on my twilight tour, send me to Hawaii." He said, 'You'd really like to go to Hawaii?' I said, "Yes sir, I'd like to be stationed out there." And I realized later I didn't tell him I had been there before. I had assumed he knew that and maybe he did, I don't know. But I said, "Yes I'd like to go to Hawaii." 'Let me take a look at it.' So about two months later, February March, that spring he called and said, 'I got a choice for you. You can either come up and be the Deputy to the DCS for Aviation who was by that time was Harry Blot or you can go out to Hawaii and be the Deputy MarForPac,' at that time was [Henry] Stackpole. And I said, "General send me to Hawaii." He said, 'Really, you really want to go to Hawaii?' I guess most guys when they retire would prefer to retire in ConUS because it is an easier transition. But I didn't care. I just said, "Hey, if you give me the chance I'll go to Hawaii, I love Hawaii."

I didn't want to be in Washington, no way. And so lo and behold a month or two later he puts out the slate and I'm going out to be Deputy MarForPac. And right as we have this Keys change of command. I think my change of command was in July as I recall, June or July and anyway I don't recall. But this is in May, Keys is leaving. So of course Monday is there and we have the big parade, great success and we have the big reception, the Lejeune Officer's Club and general officers all over the damn place. And we're standing in a big crowd, of course General Mundy is there, the Commandant and he's got a gathering of guys around him and so I walked up there and he complimented me, he said, 'Nice job there. I didn't know that aviators knew how to give commands like that.' I said, "Well yes sir. Of course I was infantry officer for three years." 'Oh yes, that's right, I forgot about that.' And then by that time Keys was there, he's there and Butch Neal. Neal walks up to me and you know right in front of him and everybody he punches me in the chest and says, 'Beak, you son of a bitch.' I said, "What's the problem General?" He said, 'I just looked at the slate and you're going to Hawaii!' I said, "Well yeah, somebody's got to do it. I might as well do it." He said, 'Yes but that's the third time you've been to Hawaii! How did you do that?' I'll tell you. Either he was putting on or he was surprised. General Mundy's eyes went [got real big] he looked at me and said, 'What!? You've been to Hawaii twice already?' I said, "Well, yes sir." And he said, 'You never told me that.' I said, "You didn't ask." I don't know if he was playing a joke or not. But that was really funny. And that was a hilarious time. And what was interesting at that time on that slate General Johnston was going to be MarForPac and he was front runner for Commandant and General Krulak was going to get MarForLant. They had just become forces. Stackpole had become the first MarForPac, Marine forces Pacific.

Q: Instead of FMF?

General Howell: Yes, yes. So they were transitioning into component commands under the CINCs instead of being under CINCPac Fleets. And so that was a big deal. So between the time of that ceremony and when I left, those orders got switched and Johnston went east coast and Krulak went to Hawaii. And a lot of people asked how did that happen, because General Krulak really wanted to go Lejeune. He wanted to stay close to the action and he was always in the middle of all that stuff. He just loved being there. Mundy says to this day that it came to his attention, he remembered that General Krulak's father had been the Commander FMFPac and he just thought it would be a good deal for his son you know to follow in his steps and do that too. That's what he said, that's the reason why he swapped them.

Q: Interesting. Any thoughts on that, working for General Krulak instead of General Johnston?

General Howell: I was really pleased to go work for General Johnston. I had never known him before except I had met him but he just had this wonderful reputation and he was just truly a gentleman, very neat and orderly. I watched him when he was in utilities, every time he would sit down in utilities, he would sit down and square everything away, crease his trousers and stay in that position. I mean the guy, he was incredible.

Q: He was Chief of Staff for General [Norman] Schwarzkopf in the Gulf War, wasn't he?

General Howell: I think so. He was highly thought of wherever he went. So you know General Krulak; we weren't enemies but we never had been friends and we really had bumped heads and so I was just wondering how that was going to work.

Q: Was the family glad going to Hawaii? Janel?

General Howell: Janel loves Hawaii too.

Q: Where did you live when you were out there?

General Howell: Well we really, that was a story unto itself but it is a Marine Corps story it is a good one to talk about. Historically all the Navy and Marine flags lived in I think it is called Makalapa, a housing area that was very close to CINCPac Fleet Headquarters. You have Pearl Harbor on the water with all of its quarters and everything and then you started to go up the hill a little bit and there's this other more Navy housing close by there and then you have a cantonment up on a rise where CINCPac Fleet Headquarters is and behind is a bunch of nice quarters that are flag quarters there. And that's where historically the commander of FMFPac and his deputy live there in Makalapa. During the year before I got there, the Marine Corps Barracks that had been at Pearl Harbor since 1911 shut down, closed down. The Marines closed the Marine barracks. A lot of people don't know that the first quarters built on Pearl Harbor, the Navy base--it used to be at Honolulu port. And when they moved and the Navy moved its fleet and its anchorage to Pearl Harbor the first quarters built at Pearl Harbor were the housing for the Marine Barracks officers. And those houses had been there since 1911. And they had the barracks and the Barracks officers' quarters and these four beautiful concrete two story buildings that had been there for so long they

had big royal palms growing around them and they were surrounded by a big hedge. You couldn't hardly see them when you were on the base because around them was all this industrial base and base that had been built there.

But you still had the old barracks building and the big field behind it where they had formations, athletic fields and field training and all that kind of stuff. And that had been part of the Marine Barracks who had owned them. And now they were closing the Barracks and turning all that over to Pearl Harbor. And the Marine Corps did not want to give up the Barracks commander's quarters. You had the four houses there, one of them had been historically been the Barracks commander's and Chesty Puller had lived there and some of the greats of the Marine Corps had commanded that Barracks and lived there and they wanted to hold on to those quarters. So I don't know if it was General Krulak or General Stackpole, whoever it was who was making the decision at that time said, 'Hey we're going to put the Marine deputy in those quarters to hold on to them. And then the Navy can have the rest of that because it was all being turned back over, rightfully so to the Navy at Pearl Harbor.' And so Janel and I moved into these old quarters and it was just wonderful.

Now they had not been flag quarters so they were pretty run down. They had been kept up basically but we were given some money to fix them up some and to improve them up to General officer's standards and what have you. But that's where we stayed and we just it was a wonderful place and a great place to be. We enhanced it, the building itself still had some bullet holes in it from Japanese attack.

Q: Is that right?

General Howell: These things were made, it's funny they were square and made out of concrete, two story building. The bottom floor of the concrete building had two great rooms one a living room that was the size of two living rooms and then a big dining room on the other side of the wall, a two chandelier dining room. It was huge. And then on the outside it had a porch, an L-shaped porch that went around the dining room part of it and it did enclose so it was part of the house, the quarters, it was enclosed. That made it sort of into a family room. Behind that was a three room frame, two room kitchen made out of wood, a two room kitchen and behind it a framed old quarters, maids quarters with a bath back there. And a back porch and that was all wood. Then upstairs you had originally they had sort of a passage for a wind passage. You know like the old buildings out in the west where you always had the hallway--a dog trot. On either side of that you had two bedrooms on either side. So you had four little square bedrooms, both with a bath in

between them and that was all that was upstairs with a hallway that went down the middle. Now the hallway didn't enclose but it was really large and it was nice and just great quarters. We were given the opportunity with some money and there was this big beautiful I think it was a mango tree, or a banyan tree out in this big yard that was enclosed. It was huge and the Marines had put lights - crimson and gold Christmas lights throughout them and they were just great at night and it had enough room where we had a gazebo built back there that could seat 30, about three dozen people, tables and this gazebo. And it was so pretty at night, normally when we entertained we would have cocktails inside and then we'd have a buffet and everybody would walk out in the backyard and eat out in the gazebo. It was great.

So we enjoyed that and protected that and passed that on to the people at that time. I think other decisions had been made I'm not sure. I think the Marines and maybe the deputies now live in there. Everybody has their own idea. Some people want to be up where all the heavies are. I don't know. I didn't want to move up on that hill. When I moved there, there was no intent for me to be the commander of Marine Forces Pacific but when the decision was made I said I'd like to stay right where I am. There was some resistance, some resistance but it was approved. I loved those quarters, those are great quarters.

Q: It sounds like a very historic.

General Howell: Oh yes. They didn't have a name or anything and they didn't have a plaque showing who all had lived there and so arbitrarily, we named it Puller House. I sent that in and the Marine Corps put a sign out front. It said this is Puller House, for General Puller, and that was accepted.

Q: But it still belongs to the Marine Corps?

General Howell: Yes, to the best of my knowledge it does.

Q: OK sir. So you're the deputy for General Krulak. How did that work out?

General Howell: It was great. Of course all this change and now this is a force command and that is a big difference. Historically everyone is subservient to CINCPac Fleet and work for CINCPac Fleet. Now all of a sudden you still got the three star, where all the other component commanders are four stars, but you're now working directly for CINCPac. And in setting this up, the Marine

Corps went through this having a component command, we had to have a component command assigned to all of the CINCs. Of course they are not called CINCs now but at that time they were all the CINCs and so we had to divvy up, we only had FMFPac, we didn't have the people to set up all these other component commands. So we became, the component commander to CINCPac, CINC US Forces Korea, and CINCCent. And so we had to support their war planning and all their exercises and all their activities. And so I'd get out there and Stackpole had just started making the initial arrangements. I think it was starting to sink into us what we had taken on, this huge responsibility. And of course General Krulak took it all with great zeal but ended up traveling. I mean he was on the road, he basically was the guy who sold this to these CINCs. It was on paper, it had been approved but I don't think they believed it or really wanted to accept it. He went out there and sold it to them and he spent a lot of time in Korea and a lot of time in Tampa and other places and all around letting people know who we were, what we were up to and that we were going to make this work.

Q: Do you remember your early days there, starting off as Krulak's deputy?

General Howell: When I had reported to him, I guess we got there in July, he had been there a month I think. I just stood at attention and just told him, I said, "Sir, I just hope you know I am here to support you 110 percent. I'll do anything, I'll make coffee if that's what you want. But I am your guy, I will be totally loyal to you and I will do your bidding and I will do everything I can to make you succeed." And he said, 'You're on.' So we just became very good friends and he was my boss and I did his bidding. And what happened, he was just gone a lot and so he said, 'You got it.' I was just sort of the local commander for operations and all the activities in Hawaii and with the Marines units. And he was up and out and I was down and in but make no mistake, Krulak knew everything that was going on and he was involved in everything but I was basically his guy, local guy to hold everything together while he was out doing things. But he is just an incredibly energetic man, brilliant, I don't think he sleeps more than two or three hours a night and so he's always doing things. Every time I've ever gone to any command I always get in there early and to see when people come in and everything. So my first morning at MarForPac I got in there at six thirty, he's already at his desk working.

So I go in at six o'clock the next day and he's already at his desk working. And I'm thinking I can't do this. So I just went in to him and I said, "General, when do you expect me to be at work?" He said, 'That's just the way I am.' He said, 'I go out and run and I might be here at five o'clock. So I don't expect you to be here just because I'm here.' So I started coming in at

seven doing regular Marine Corps 12 to 16 hours a day instead of 20. That's just the way it was. Now he would leave earlier than me and he was, I bet he was in the rack normally by eight thirty or nine o'clock every night. But then he was up early, early and he went out and ran every day.

Q: What were your normal duties, or routine?

General Howell: He was going and we were trying to resolve the issues of a force commander in serving all of these things and getting it all done. And he was working that, I'm supporting him, that was the gist of what we were doing. Plus orchestrating UDPs, and the support. You know the main job of a force commander is just to provide logistics and manpower and the support for the MEFs so that they can get their job done. So I was 'deputy dog.' I was going his bidding and trying to help him do things and still fly.

Q: Were you starting to fly?

General Howell: Yes, I was flying. They had 53s, that's all the Marine Corps had at K-Bay so I was going over and flying with the 53s. They were hurting. They weren't hardly flying as much as they should have. They were having aircraft problems, they were just in the mood of moving all the Ds out to Hawaii and they weren't in good shape. I really felt like a criminal that I would go fly with those guys. See I knew I was taking time away from a kid who really needed it. And I never really got checked out in a bird, I never really got that. I got a NATOPS [Naval Air training operating standardization] check, I'd just go fly with them and fly co-pilot. The Reserves came out there a couple times, had F-18s on deployments, Reserve squadron. They invited me to fly with them so I flew the F-18 every chance I got with those guys. I got to shoot a missile, they had a missile shoot out there.

Q: Yes, I think [VMFA] 112 came out there one time.

General Howell: Yes, I got to shoot a Sidewinder missile and that was fun.

Q: What did you think of the reserves compared to an active duty squadron?

General Howell: They were good. They're different. I was just very surprised how casual and it seemed me sort of loose the way they do things. Sort of, 'OK, we'll go do this.' They don't do the

planning. We are so anal about you know getting everything done, everything planned, everything down to a T and they are just sort of casual and, 'OK we'll do it, you're OK.' It was a different atmosphere. But they're very good at what they do. They're excellent pilots. And they take care of business, so that was interesting. But there was a big, we're just taking care of business. I'm happy at my work. I know what is going to happen. One thing that happened that I guess I can say for the record. Been there I guess through Christmas and you know they're starting to make slates and people are talking about whose going to do this, whose going to do that. And I just walked in to Chuck Krulak one day and I said, "Sir can I talk to you?" 'Yes, sit down.' Just one on one, and said, "I've probably had more self-confidence than I deserve and always thought that I was capable. And I know General Mundy doesn't plan on me being a three star or going to that level and I just wondered if you could tell me what it is that keeps me from doing that. What is the limitation I have. I know it is a done deal but I'd like to work on it and improve myself because I hate to think that I am limited in that regard because no one has told me why and it would be nice to find out why because I like to improve myself. I like to be better." And he was sort of shocked and he sternly said, 'I just don't see that. I don't think that's the situation. I think it is just a matter of spaces.' He said, 'I don't see you limited. I don't see you in that regard.' And so that was an interesting conversation we had.

Q: But you had the impression you were not going to be promoted, you went out as his deputy and that was it.

General Howell: I think he knew that. I mean he knew General Mundy's plan and General Mundy's plan was for me not to be promoted, for me to retire at the end of that time. No hard feelings, but I was just trying to find out from someone from another perspective, that put me in a category where I was not, didn't have the potential to be in those kinds of billets. And I think he very honestly said, he said, 'I don't see that. If there is such a thing I don't understand it.'

Q: Did that get your hopes up?

General Howell: No but it made me feel better that he felt that way about it.

Q: What were your impressions of General Krulak as a leader?

General Howell: Oh he was great. I found out he was a terrific commander, trusted his people, worked people hard but would ask you to do something and stayed out of your way and let you do it. And then you'd come back and report to him and he was that way with everybody. There were some things that were very interesting. He was in the weeds on a lot of things but he would know the details without interfering with what was going on. He wasn't a micro-manager but he did seek detailed information. Because he had the capability, the grasp to hear more than me. I have been more of a big picture generalist and he really, he has a capability to grasp with his mental capability to really get down in the details of a lot of stuff and retaining that. I can hear that stuff and understand it, but I'll be damned if I can remember it and he can. He's really gifted in that regard. He remembers. He remembers great detail of things and so that gives him a great capability. At the same time though he didn't micro-manage. But he was aware. I mean if somebody dicked something up he knew about it. Even though he wasn't interfering with them but you had to pay a price because he didn't put up with people screwing up.

Some things that happened out at the MEF at Okinawa that happened and he was very upset about and I went out and fiddled with this.

Q: When you were commanding he was Commandant?

General Howell: Yes. But these were Marine Corps matters more than operational matters. So it was interesting. You know you find yourself working both sides of it. Even though you work for the CINCs you still are a Marine; you have a Marine Corps culture and the good and order and discipline of the Marine Corps to contend with as well as the combat operations and that aspect of it. There are gray areas there and so you have to understand where they all fit in that regard.

Q: I'm sure that was very difficult to keep that straight.

General Howell: No, well it can get fuzzy, but it's part of the game.

Q: You just have to remember what lane you're in at a certain time. What do you recall as the big things that happened?

General Howell: The big things that seemed to happen was General Krulak came back and he got invited to go with the Secretary of the Navy who was taking some Iwo Jima veterans out to Iwo Jima. It seemed like that was in March, February or March of '95. And when they were out there

they went to Iwo Jima and he went with them and while they were on Iwo Jima, the Secretary of the Navy told him that he was recommending him to be the next Commandant of the Marine Corps. So we got wind of that and when he came back we had a party organized and a great celebration.

Q: Oh did you?

General Howell: Yes, just at his quarters and it lasted about 15 minutes. He wasn't that kind of guy. But we were all very happy and pleased. But what happened is I had never really been around somebody who had been selected to be a Commandant of the Marine Corps but the process is quite strenuous and extensive. He had to go back and pay his respects to members of Congress and to DOD and you had to get the blessing of all kinds of people. Start getting indoctrinated and all that. So he basically was gone and he said, 'Beak, take care of business.' So I was sort of the acting MarForPac from that day, even though he was still MarForPac, I was running it. And of course he kept tabs but it was sort of my ball game and it was interesting being Deputy dog running it.

Q: The rank differential, was that a challenge?

General Howell: You're working with a bunch of four stars and you're a two star, I started going to conferences in Tampa and rubbing shoulders with these guys. It wasn't easy. They were polite but kept a distance and I don't think they really took me too seriously in a lot of things. And the Marines' role wasn't taken too seriously because of the lack of clout and what have you. And, oh by the way, we were still trying to make our way, and all the CINCs, every one of them would tell you, 'How can you work for me and still be working for that guy too?' Every other component commander that was their only CINC they worked for. And here we were working for three.

Q: They wanted to make sure you could do it if they needed you.

General Howell: That was it. There was great jealousy. And every time I left the island Prueher got upset: 'Why are you going, I'm here, why aren't you here?' I mean that was not easy. That was tough. And it was tough on Prueher, he caught that kind of crap. And I don't know if Prueher and Krulak were classmates at the [Naval] Academy but I know they were there at the same time and they knew each other from way back and there was a rivalry I think competitive juices flow

between those two men. They were not enemies but there was a rivalry, friendly at times, unfriendly at times. And every time a Marine would do something stupid on Okinawa or in Prueher's command he would pull me in and chew my ass out. Threatened to take all the Marines out of Okinawa and all that other crap.

Q: That was when you were CG or deputy?

General Howell: Both.

Q: When General Krulak was gone?

General Howell: When Krulak was gone.

Q: You were in the hot seat.

General Howell: I caught the wrath of the guy. And then when Krulak became Commandant I really got the wrath of Prueher, as a matter of fact Prueher didn't come in until Krulak was gone as I recall. So that was later, I'm getting ahead of myself.

Q: Well [Admiral Richard C.] Macke was there.

General Howell: Yes, Macke. So I'm off base. Prueher wasn't there when Krulak was there, Macke was there. And so it was later when Krulak became Commandant that this guy would go off. But anyway I'm doing that and we were making do and he's still got so much energy we're on the phone almost every day talking about things and I'm getting guidance. But he's not in my knickers, he's really helping me, he's letting me do things he's just checking. And he's also giving me damn good advice. The guy really, he had made a lot of deals in his travels and he was starting to enlighten me. I'd talk about this issue and he'd say, 'Oh I talked to so and so and he said this. So you call them and remind them.' So he was backing me up and helping me keep some of these people in line who were trying to work their way out of some of the deals he made with them. And so it was just a lot of negotiations and I won't say a tug of war but it is a sensitivity session of trying to find our place as a component command at that time and trying to prove that we could really do this and really we ourselves had doubts about it. We looked at the awesome responsibility with the number of people we had, how the heck are we going to do this? And we

have a staff of one CINC and we're going to have to serve three. How are we going to do this? That was all those issues that were brewing. Anyway the slate comes out from the Commandant, General Mundy and General Christmas is slated to come out and take Krulak's place that summer when he becomes Commandant. This is '95. We had just got there in '94, he got selected in February of '95 and he's going to take over that summer.

So all these things are moving fast. So something happens. The guy who was supposed to take Christmas' place is the one with Manpower at Headquarters, General [Bertie D.] Lynch. I think he was down at Pendleton. And he was going to come in and take Manpower and get a third star to take Manpower and Christmas was going to come out and I was going to be his Deputy. And something happened, the Secretary of the Navy got a report or something happened where he decided he was not going to allow General Lynch to get a third star and be Manpower. So that upset the apple cart. Now Mundy's got to figure out how is he going to deal with this. And, oh by the way, Christmas had proven himself to be the best DCS for Manpower we had had in years. He had really done a great job. And so one early morning, it was about three thirty or four in the morning and I get a phone call. And it is General Krulak whispering. I don't know why he was whispering. "Sir? (man I was asleep). What's up?" "Hey, I got to ask you a question, you got to come clean, you got to come clean." "Sir, what is it?" "Have you ever done anything that if it came out public could bring great shame and disgrace on the Marine Corps?" And I thought of about 20 things and I said, "I don't think so, sir. I'm a fighter pilot and you know me. But I don't think there's anything that you don't know about me that I've done." He said, 'OK, OK. I think General Mundy is going to recommend you to be my replacement. But just hold on, don't tell anybody.' And so that happened. And I told you the background I found out later what had occurred, I found this all out later, that was all a surprise to me.

The next thing I know it seemed like it was either May or June they come out with the announcement that I am being recommended by the Secretary of the Navy to the President to be MarForPac. Immediately several hate letters come in accusing me of gundecking my log book and not flying flights. And I said I'd flown and thank God I had been meticulous about that.

Q: Really, where did these come from?

General Howell: I don't know you just never, never know. And then there was someone else accused me of hiding John Graham's marriage things in Norway and that I had covered that up and let a person be an adulterer. And thank God General Dailey was Assistant Commandant at that time; I had called him on that matter and he had given me the guidance that I followed on that and

when the investigating officers came out and investigated all that, thank God I had all my records, my flight records there and they checked all that and it was all just what I recorded is what I had flown. And then General Dailey backed up the action I had taken on that matter but those things delayed everything. The President would not recommend me until those things were settled by the IG. And then finally he recommends me and my name goes before Congress in a list with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs his re-recommendation, [General John] Shalikashvili has his recommendation. This was President Clinton and there was a Republican Congress and they were giving Clinton a lot of crap and so they sat on his name and so they sat on my name. My name was in that list and he and me and about four other officers. And so I was nominated in June or July and I was the acting two star until the first of October. You know the last day of the fiscal year the Congress approved that and my name was approved at that time. So that's when I became a three star and the official commander of the Marine Forces Pacific.

Q: Incredible story. That was all in 1995?

General Howell: That was the fall of '95. And I had been acting for some time. General Krulak had become the Commandant in July or August as I recall.

Q: I think they had to change command in June.

General Howell: In June. It makes a difference that you all of a sudden get a third star and carry on. I think I was on like a promotion board in Washington, D.C. at that time and got a call, 'Hey you got approved.' Janel and a good friend Marilyn Osborne and I think my brother in law who is still living in Maryland at the time came into the Commandant's office and just had a little private ceremony in his office where he promoted me to three stars. And Hearney was still ACMC, he was there as I recall. And so that was a very nice occasion.

Q: Do you remember General Krulak's leaving MarForPac, it wasn't a change of command.

General Howell: It was a weird thing. They had a parade and I was there.

Q: He didn't have a replacement though.

General Howell: No. I can't remember who else was standing there. He had somebody else there. I think it was Hearney came out. I don't, I'm trying to remember who it was. But his ceremony was just a pass and review, did not pass the flag but said farewell and said, he said, 'I cannot announce who my replacement is at this time. But I can assure you all that my replacement is here today.' But the problem was there were two or three of us there, the people that came out. So everybody was wondering who the hell it was going to be. Stackpole? There was a couple other senior general officers there and so.

Q: Did he say something about it's going to be, and then he introduces you or something like that?

General Howell: Yes he did but he kept it really vague. He kept it very vague and so I think I was assured it was me but the way people heard it, it made people wonder. They thought it was somebody else. A lot of people thought it was the other guy that was there. And I'm trying to remember who that was. Janel probably remembers who that was. I had forgotten about that parade but that actually happened and he tried to orchestrate it so that people would get the signal that it is General Howell but the way he said it and the other person there, a lot of people thought it was the other guy was going to get it. It was sort of funny. So we didn't really have a change of command.

Q: Right. Going back to Krulak. His reputation as a very moral man and letting his Christian beliefs affect his leadership style. Were you aware of that, did that come?

General Howell: Well he was just a very moral man. And he was not forgiving of people who did things that were amoral, if he got any indication that someone was unfaithful to their wife or was doing things that weren't really gentlemanly he held them accountable in the strictest sense. He was unforgiving in that regard. And some of that I think came out in the Tailhook incident where people were basically sort of in a twilight zone where they hadn't really taken action but they had been there. He couldn't forgive them.

He personally forgave them but he felt that they had put a mark against the Marine Corps that he couldn't forgive. It wasn't the person. You know General Krulak is a human, he is a Christian and he will forgive people. But as a Marine and a Marine officer that is different. He expects Marines, he cannot, just like that phone call he gave me. He could not abide with anybody taking an action or doing something that would bring shame upon the Marine Corps. So that was

the moral aspect of it. It was more, it wasn't as an individual as much as it was an officer of the Marines.

Q: Got you.

General Howell: So he was very strict about that and he was very serious about that.

Q: How important is integrity.

General Howell: Oh it's everything. Integrity is everything. We're all human. But we all work hard at that. I think one of the greatest lessons on that is looking at John McCain I keep thinking of him as a POW and just being tortured and tortured until he broke and then going back and feeling shame because he broke but fighting back to repair himself and try to maintain his integrity. I think we are all faced with that as people. There's no perfect person. We all make mistakes but if you have every intent and you really work hard at maintaining your honor I think it is so important. I think honor and integrity are the basis. They have always been the basis of any relationship I have with anybody. It is trust. And people who have integrity can be trusted. People who don't have integrity can't be trusted. And so if you lie to me or you do something behind my back and don't tell me, I'll forgive you but I'll never trust you again and so that's the difference. Integrity is the basis of any good relationship between two people I think.

Q: It is really important in the military.

General Howell: Yes. I think it's important everywhere but in the military it is a life or death thing. It is vital. Because of the stakes of the game, we're talking about human life. I had some aviators that did some things and I had to tell them, "OK (they had apologized), hey I accept your apology but you're not on my team anymore." And I said, "I forgive you, nothing personal, but leopards don't change their spots." Once you go and make that step, you step across the line that's the way you go.

Q: I think that's about it for deputy MarForPac.

END OF SESSION IV

SESSION V

12 May 2006

Q: Alright this is the fifth session of the interview with Lt General Howell and today's date is May 12th 2006 and we're still here in Austin, Texas-- God's country: Texas.

You were talking about VT-4, when you were in flight school and wanted to add something.

General Howell: When I was going through flight training I mentioned when I was in jets and finished at Meridian. We went back down to Pensacola to VT-4 [Jet Training Squadron Four] flying the T-2A [Buckeye] for gunnery and for carrier quals [qualifications]. And I just wanted to mention one of the instructors there, who was just so admired by the students and later on became a very successful, had a successful career, Jim Mead. Big Jim Mead [who] later became General Mead, was one of our instructors in gunnery there and so I thought that'd be worthy of mentioning because he was really, really admired. We had several outstanding instructor pilots, and I wish I could remember the other ones, who later were leaders, squadron commanders and what-have-you, in the Marine Corps who were instructors in VT-4 and they were really great; you really admired them, tried to emulate them.

Q: You wanted to add something about the Naval Academy too.

General Howell: I forgot to mention that besides being the officer rep and all that, during the summers, the Naval Academy sort of shuts down except for the young freshman Plebes, who come in for their initial training. There's not a lot of activity. The upperclassmen go on cruise; where you go depends on what class you're in. The people going from their freshman to their sophomore year go on what they call "the road show." They divide them into groups of about 40 or 50 and they take them for a week at a time to different places where the Navy and the Marine Corps show their assets and how they function in their mission. And they learn the mission, as well as they get exposure to those specialties. That way, later on when they decide which way they want to go after graduation they have some knowledge. They call it "the road show" because they go to at that time I think it was five different places. They go to a submarine base for a week. They would go to a surface line base for a week and spend time with destroyers and cruisers and go out to sea with them during that time. They spent a week with the Marines at Quantico and they would spend a

week, I think, with the nuke [nuclear] people and then they spent a week down in Pensacola. Florida. And it depended on the climate, and the budget, and sometimes they would get to fly a lot, and sometimes they didn't. And I was lucky because while they were there, at each one of those places, you have what you called an "officer representative," who would go from the Naval Academy, would go TDY [temporary duty] to that place, set up shop, and basically receive these groups, make sure they were billeted and taken care of, be in charge of their "good order and discipline," make sure they minded their manners and kept them in line. Because these are young men, who had been in tight quarters for a year.

Q: You get a little freedom and they might want to go crazy.

General Howell: Yes and then look after their training. Make sure that they were supported correctly. And I got to, because Captain Butler, my boss, was the senior naval aviator at the Naval Academy, I had volunteered, and he made sure I got to go down to Pensacola to be the officer rep. And this was a six-week thing, (I wanted to stay the whole summer) but to spread the joy, they let two different officers take turns down there. And so, I went down initially and immediately called down to VT-4 because we knew we were going to be flying. They were going to let them fly with VT-4, which at that time had T-2B's and T-2C's, the two engine T-2's. And I called down and the operations and training officer there was a Marine major named Gary Brown, just a great guy. And I called him and said, "Hey, my name is Howell and I'm an old F-4 guy. I'm coming down to be with the midshipman, and I just wondered if I'd be able to fly with you guys?" And he said, "Hey, we need pilots and we know we're going to be flying these guys everyday." So he said, "I'll send you the NATOPS [Naval Aviation Training and Operations Procedures] and the tests and all that." And he said, "You take all that stuff." I had an instrument card, because we were still flying for proficiency, you know at Andrews [Andrews AFB], and so he sent me all that training material. I got through the T-2 NATOPS, took the test, the open book. I went down with the first group of midshipmen. And we got there on a Saturday and their syllabus didn't start until Monday, of their training. And so, he immediately took me down to their hangar, gave me the closed book exam, fitted me out in their torso harness and all that stuff. And I got in an airplane with a guy and we went on a two day cross country and got ten hours, to get me current in the airplane.

Then, starting on Monday, I was one of the instructors who took the midshipman up on their Fam hops. The way they would do that, they would have a first group, they would truck most of them out to an outlying field, and I can't [remember]. It was a field that was right on Eglin [Air Force Base], between Pensacola and the Air Force Training Area there at Eglin, there was an

outlying field there and I can't remember the name of it.

So it was about an hour and a half ride in a bus, but the first group of flyers, got to go get in an airplane there at Forrest Sherman. You'd fly over to the outlying field. You'd go fly your mission, land, and we just kept the engines running and they had this set up, so that you'd shut down your left engine. They would trade midshipman, they had, you know, plane captains and instructors there to put one guy in the backseat, take that guy out, and then you would take the next guy up and take them through a Fam. So, you know, take them through a squirrel cage [loop, ½ Cuban eight, aileron rolls, barrel roll, split-S], show them acrobatics, let them fly the airplane and bring them in for a carrier break and a landing and then "boom," here came the next one. And so you do that four times, and then the last guy you would take back to Pensacola. So I got to do that, and you do that three days a week and then they went and did other things too. But that was really neat and I got to log a lot of flight time down there. And I just enjoyed the heck out of it and really got to see how the midshipman reacted to flying. It was interesting.

Q: That no doubt was a good way for them to tell if they would like flying.

General Howell: Some guys would just turn green and get sick immediately. Some of them just ate it up and loved it. And some of them just hung on. But that was a great experience. I got to do that two summers while we were down there. So, that was a good deal and very enjoyable.

Q: Were you able to bring the family down?

General Howell: Janel and the kids came down; they would drive to Atlanta initially, from Annapolis, and stay with her mother, and spend time with grandmother for a week or two and then drive down to Pensacola. And we'd rent an apartment out on the beach there.

Q: That's a great place.

General Howell: Just had fun with the family and kids, and get to fly two or three days a week. Of course there were some problems with midshipman getting out of line and logistics problems. Pensacola's like any other place, they have a budget and this was a strain on their personnel and what have you. There was always sort of a little tension and you had to find a senior person who really believed in the Naval Academy and would support you--as a rule that worked out. So, it wasn't just all a bed of roses but overall it was really a hoot. It was really a kick. So, I just enjoyed

the heck out of that. And so that was when I was at the Naval Academy. That was a wonderful aspect of being there.

Q: There was something you were telling me about when you were in the 2d MAW...

General Howell: When I was at the 2^d MAW, I had failed to mention while we were talking about it, you had asked, and I had acknowledged that we were involved in a lot of combined arms exercises and CPX's [command post exercises] and I had told the tale how I had to be the acting MEF [Marine Expeditionary Force] commander from time to time, when I preferred to be the wing commander because we had a wonderful staff of officers who really wanted to go to the field and exercise the wing's capability in case we did go to war. So, we could go anywhere and control aircraft and support operations. And one of the best deals we got was an exercise, and I can't remember the name of it and maybe you can find it in your book, but it was a combined arms joint exercise that was located down in the Caribbean. And so, we actually took the battle staff of our wing down to NAS Roosevelt Roads. We took all our expeditionary gear, set up a camp there and tents there on the base, and our own mess and our air combat control apparatus, and our headquarters, you know combat headquarters. Also, brought a couple of tactical squadrons down there including some helicopter support and operated aircraft out of Roosevelt Roads for a couple weeks. And that was just really a great exercise. Troops really got into it. They had a good-looking camp, brought a lot of heavies down there to see it because they were quite impressed.

Q: You had mentioned a name for the camp there, what was it?

General Howell: They called it "Camp Beak."

Q: Camp Beak. I wonder where they got that name.

General Howell: Well, they named it. I did not name it, but the next thing I know, at the time, Col [William L.] Nyland, my chief-of-staff and Assistant Wing Commander, he called me, you know. We'd only been there a couple of days. He said, "Sir, I got something I got to show you and we got to get your permission." They went out and had this big wooden sign called "Camp Beak" on there, they put out in front of that thing. And I said, "Sure." So we had our, everybody had their photographs made with the sign on Camp Beak.

Q: That's something. Anything else on that, good training?

General Howell: It was serious business, and we did a lot of great training and preparation. I think we were really ready to go do anything called upon by the National Command Authority. But, to have a little fun, I discovered when I got to 2d MAW that still, to this day, a commanding general of a division or wing in the Marine Corps has a field mess, which is boxed up and belongs to the command and actually has china and silver and all the cooking utensils to set up a mess for the General officer and his immediate staff. I can recall back when I was at Cherry Point flying in the F-4 where the wing commander had a big thing out in the field one time and had everybody there as guests for the mess, using his field mess. I watched and I thought they had shipped all that stuff from the mess hall, and I didn't realize that that belonged to him. And it's usually in boxes, it was brought to my attention that, "Hey, by-the-way, you know you have this." And by-golly every time we went to the field we took the mess with us.

Q: As part of a normal pack-up for the wing commander; I guess you put it to good use?

General Howell: Yes, we would actually set up a general officers' mess tent by the regular mess tent for everyone and we would only open it in the evenings. We'd have an evening meal there and it would be served the same the meal that the troops got. But, we did it in the mess and it was sort of a formal occasion. In an exercise people are coming and going and eating when they can. Well, I made sure, I had my senior staff come there and be there at a certain time so we all sat down to eat together in the evenings. And I required as part of the mess that every officer, in the mess, should be prepared to entertain the mess with a humorous story or a song or a poem.

Q: Every night?

General Howell: Yes, every evening. And be prepared, if called upon. I would randomly call upon different officers to stand and deliver, and some of them fumbled and jumbled, and some of them took it as a great challenge, and they started a rivalry on who could entertain the most. And so, we had people who wrote original poems, wrote songs, and it was really good. It was fun. When all was said and done, someone in the staff took all of those things and published them and put them in a book and they gave them to all the Marines, all the stories. I've got it in a box somewhere. But, it was really a hoot. It was really fun and people got a lot out of that.

Q: Just officers on the staff attended?

General Howell: We always invited the squadron commanders, and of course, the sergeant major was a member of the mess. And he could always invite Staff NCO's [non-commissioned officers] to come and join us at the mess. And that got to be a big deal for staff NCO's, who the sergeant major would bring in.

Q: Your operations in the field, reminds me, I should have asked about, is how much focus was on expeditionary operations, were you setting up FOB's [forward operating bases] and FARP's [forward arming and refueling points] and exercising the wing support groups--MWSG's [Marine wing support groups] and all.

General Howell: It was a big deal. That was a continuous quest; to try to be as ready as possible for deployments. Particularly, after Desert Storm, wanted to keep that skill going and wanted to keep that equipment up. And so, almost weekly, either my control group or my wing support group would have something going on out in the field. Where they would require people to set up and operate, and I spent a lot of time observing them; they always wanted me to come out and see what they were doing. And so, I spent a lot of time out observing them, out in the field, working, you know setting up their gear, and working it. ComEx's [communication exercises] all of that, the control group had to have ComEx's continuously. I learned all about grounding comm. gear.

Q: Grounding?

General Howell: Grounding--how important that is. If you don't have that ground in at the right depth you cannot talk to anybody. And that has stymied comm in so many places because they didn't understand how important it is, grounding your comm gear. Those grounding poles sticks have to be in. Got to have a certain amount of moisture in the soil and I never knew that. The difference between that thing being in three feet one inch and three feet six inches can mean your unit can talk two thousand miles away or only five miles away. So, I learned a lot, that I never knew at that time.

Q: That's interesting. Looking back at that when you had the 2d Wing and your time at Headquarters Marine Corps, was that capability ever under fire or under the gun because some might say it duplicates other logistics parts of the Marine Corps?

General Howell: Oh, yes. That goes back to this issue I talked about, General Gray and manpower, and how there was a push to reduce, Marine Corps manpower and a lot of people looked to all the support that the wing's had, that was redundant to FSSG [Fleet Service Support Group]. The trucks and the forklifts and the graders, and all that stuff it takes to set up an expeditionary airfield. FSSG said, "Hey, we can do that. You don't need all that. The wing doesn't need all that stuff; that's a lot of men and materiel for that stuff."

Q: Duplicative.

General Howell: Oh, it was. Yes, a continuous debate. I'm happy to say while I was around we won it because we proved it just by example. That the wing is always, not always, but in many cases two or three hundred miles away from the operating force or the ground force commander, where the FSSG has to support his operations and their headquarters and their movement and all that stuff. And you might have a wing headquarters at a base on an island that separated from where you're operating and they're giving you support but they have to set up an expeditionary airfield. We lost some of that, and probably for good reason. Some of the big stuff, heavy haulers that you just don't use very often, was a redundancy and the people and the gear and all the support of it. A lot of that stuff was consolidated at the FSSG. We lost some of that but we did maintain a core capability of setting up an expeditionary airfield and that was very important. And I'm glad to say that we exercised that to great effect.

Q: Where did you exercise that on the East Coast?

General Howell: At Bogue Field, it was used all the time, those were 2d Wing people who were out there maintaining that expeditionary airfield. People don't realize how many times we would tear up that field and put it back down again, just to exercise our troops and make sure they knew how to do that. How to lay down a SATS [short airfield for tactical support] field and all that kind of stuff.

Q: So, they were still using a SATS strip and all there?

General Howell: Oh, big time. We used it continuously and I personally went out there. I remember the first hop I had with the wing. [I] went out, launched out of Bogue Field, and had to

come down doing an arrested landing on a two thousand foot strip. So, that was quite a challenge for somebody who hadn't flown in three months [laughing].

Q: Was that in an F-18?

General Howell: Yes.

Q: It makes it easy doesn't it?

General Howell: It does. The F-18 is just--I was trying to fly with the mirror, [Fresnel lens], I'm an old guy, you know. I was flying the mirror. That reminds me of another story.

Q: OK-go ahead.

General Howell: I went out to Twentynine Palms in an F-18 to visit. We had several squadrons deployed out there, supporting a big CAX [combined arms exercise] out there. And, had Harriers, F-18's, and some helicopters, we had Cobras and 46's [CH-46,]. We had a big group of our wing out there, working out there. So, I went down to Beaufort, got in an F-18, single-seater, and flew on the wing, I can't remember, I think it was [Norman G.] "Dutch" Schlaich, who was a skipper.

Q: He had a squadron?

General Howell: Yes he did. On that occasion it might have been some one else. We flew out to Twentynine Palms on a cross-country flight. We went through Oklahoma City and because of winds, had to stop in Barksdale AFB in Louisiana. And I'll never forget, the lead called ahead, I didn't talk much on the radio; he was making all the calls. I was just flying the wing, you know "two-two" [slang for responding to radio transmissions, wingman acknowledges lead's instructions with "two"] flying the wing. And when we landed, we taxi right up to base ops and they put out a red carpet, right out to my airplane. The commander of Barksdale, an Air Force two-star was out there standing at attention.

When I got out of the airplane, he salutes and all that. I said, "Man, I hope you know I didn't ask for this and I'm embarrassed because you've got bigger things to do than see me." He said, "Listen buddy, anytime I get a two-star General coming in here in a fighter plane, I'm going to be out here to say 'hello' to him." Because, "You don't see that very often. That's neat."

Q: Sounds like a good guy.

General Howell: Yes, he was. And so, they still had a bunch of B-52's there at that time. I think they still do. Then we were at Oklahoma City and then into Twentynine Palms, which was a SATS field, you know landing on a metal strip. And I actually arrested. Our support guys out there, [the] arresting crew, they were always looking for somebody to trap. A lot of guys though felt that that was a waste of time and didn't want to do it. I'd always take a trap anytime anybody wanted me to. So anyway, we got to fly several missions in the F-18 there, air-to-ground, flew the Cobra [AH-1]; flew in the 46. Had a great time, and coming back about four or five days later we stopped in Oklahoma City again and he asked me, he said, "General, can I have a favor?" And I said, "What's that?" He said, "I've got a good friend who is an instructor at Meridian [Naval Air Station] and they never get to see Marine F-18's coming through there. I've talked to him, and if we will go into Meridian, and turn there and get fuel there, even though we probably don't need it, he will have a bunch of Marine students out there at base ops just to look at the airplanes and talk to us." He said, "Would you mind doing that?" And I said, "Heck, I don't mind being a hero." And so, and we checked the weather, it was good. There were scattered thunderstorms in the area. By the time we got there, Meridian was just clobbered. I mean it was raining. Rain! I mean overcast and rainy and so, so we split up and come down individually. GCA [ground controlled approach] Meridian had great GCA controllers because of all the student pilots there. And so, I'm coming in and really don't break out under the clouds until about 400 or 500 feet and it's still in the rain. There was the runway and the mirror and I land and roll out. And just water up everywhere. And taxi in and try to get out of the airplane and not get the seat wet and all that, because it was just raining cats and dogs. Finally, get to talk to these kids and all that stuff and after refueling, farewell, and we're filing to leave, he asked me, he said, "How did it go coming in?" I said, "Wow, it was pretty hairy." Because one thing, the F-18 you have a heads up display [HUD]. You can fly that thing all the way down, but flying through the clouds with a HUD was just, really disorienting to me, I never really got comfortable doing that. So, you know you can take your gyro [gyroscope], your ADI [attitude direction indicator], and put it on one of your displays and just fly it. And I actually would fly my ADI, on one of the displays. You've got three ops in the thing. So I think it is a wonderful airplane. So, I was just sort of flying it for altitude and everything and the heading, you know checking the HUD and all that stuff. But, back to "Ace" he said, "Well heck, man all I did, as I came in, I just got a radar lock on the 1,000 foot marker and locked that up with my radar and put my air-to-ground and I just flew that sucker." And he said, "I listened to the

GCA and I just monitored his calls and I was close to him.” The death dot was right there on the 1,000 foot mark.

Q: Man, why didn’t we ever think of that in the Phantom [F-4 Phantom]? Just locking up the 1,000 foot marker?

General Howell: Oh gee. It was just incredible. The F-18 you’ve got great air-to-air radar, but when you got into weather you switched to air-to-ground and crank your air-to-ground radar antennae up. And you could just read the weather; it was just a great weather radar for seeing the cells and thunderstorms. You could fly around them and all that stuff. So, and then taking off, we took off in the rain again and we were right at the point where we shouldn’t because there so much water on the runway you can FOD [foreign object damage] your engines. But we got off, did it, it looked so sweet in that airplane. The minute you take off, we did a ten second interval roll because of the weather--the minute I got airborne, just go to radar auto lock on the stick and “BAM!” [accompanied by snapping of fingers for emphasis of quickness], just locked him up. And just trailed him three or four miles behind him all the way up until we got out of the clouds and then rendezvoused you know [phonetic]. It makes it sweet.

Q: Just like having Spider [William L. “Spider” Nyland] in your backseat there?

General Howell: It was just that the F-18 is just a dream come true. So, I’ve talked enough on stuff and we haven’t even got to today’s business, I don’t think.

Q: There, as a matter of fact, there was something else that I wanted to ask about. I happened to notice the picture of the *Teddy Roosevelt* [USS *Theodore Roosevelt*, CVN-71] up there, what was that operation about? It was run by CinC [Commander-in-Chief] USACom [United States Atlantic Command], and a Joint Adaptive Force Planning; anything significant about that?

General Howell: I remember we did have a combined arms big joint exercise where we had ships at sea. And we actually had General [Barry] McAffrey, brought I think he had the 2d Army or something, brought his headquarters, up to Lejeune and we had the MEF HQ. And it was a huge exercise. And General [William M.] Keys, once more he was called up to be the overall combined commander of this combined force. So once more I had to be the MEF commander, the acting MEF commander.

Q: It looks like it might have been an Army exercise. How was the *Teddy Roosevelt* involved in that?

General Howell: Well, it was involved in the exercise. It was a Navy combined arms and they were actually off the coast running missions.

Q: Did it have Marine squadrons aboard?

General Howell: VMFA-312 went aboard *Teddy Roosevelt*. I think they were aboard at that time. I think they were one of the squadrons operating on the *Teddy Roosevelt*. And so, I can't confirm that. But, you know that's when Jim Amos took his squadron, that CAG [carrier air group] was part of the *Teddy Roosevelt*, and they went on a Med [Mediterranean] cruise.

Q: Overall, how did that go, that first cruise go with 312 aboard?

General Howell: It was fantastic. They really proved themselves. To be quite honest, the CAG, the Navy captain was not happy to have those Marines there.

Q: Why is that?

General Howell: Jim Amos really caught a lot of heat for nothing. He was sort of under the gun. This guy really leaned on him. And when all is said and done, about three-fourths through that cruise I got a letter from one of the squadron commanders in that CAG, a Navy commander, who had an F-14 squadron, wrote me a personal letter to tell me what a great leader Jim Amos was. He said, "I just wanted to let you know he is the best squadron commander on this ship. He is the best, he has the best squadron on this ship. And you might not hear that from the boss because there is a bias against him. The guy is leaning on him. He's being unfair to him and I just wanted to let you know that Jim Amos is an outstanding commander."

Q: Wow.

General Howell: And I think I put that letter with his fitness report.

Q: I'd like to get a copy of that, for the Archives. Were there any new squadrons that you stood up when you were MAG-24 [Marine Air Group] Commander?

General Howell: Yes, we had been part of the unit deployment program. MAG-24 had for five or six years back, when I was a squadron commander, back in the late '70's, now this is '84-'85 timeframe, we also became heavily involved in providing [CH] 46 squadrons to go aboard. Marine amphibious brigades, they were going out on WestPac [Western Pacific] cruises, sourcing them. And they would come out of California and pick up a 46 squadron that would go out with them and also from time to time I think we provided some Hueys [UH-1s]. And I don't know if they had 53's [CH-53] or not-- we had the older 53's, I don't know if they took them or not. But, we found that we did not have the assets to support that operation continuously. We needed another squadron. So, they stood up the "Purple Foxes"--[HMM-] 364, the Purple Foxes [phonetic], had an incredible combat record from Vietnam. But, they were one of the newer squadrons and so they were stood down after Vietnam. And we had a big ceremony there [and we] had the Commandant come out. General [P.X.] Kelley came out and, of course, General Steele, our Brigade commanding General and I, we had a big formation. You know, celebrating the stand up; the Commandant brought their flag out from Headquarters [Marine Corps] to present it to us, for their squadron. And that was a big deal. They performed very well. That squadron picked up and had a great record from the very beginning.

The squadron CO had already had 262 [HMM-262] and was on my group staff. And I, just to make sure they got off on the right start, I gave him that command initially. And that was his second [command] and he did a great job. They were really good. They were good.

Q: Let's go back to MarForPac [Marine Forces Pacific]. Did you have a change of command ceremony when you did take over MarForPac?

General Howell: No.

Q: Nothing, just went from one place to the other?

General Howell: When General [Charles C.] Krulak was chosen to be the Commandant, we had a parade. And he just sort of gave a head fake that "Hey, somebody's going to take my place. He's probably here today." But, he couldn't say who. Because of the way it was said, and who was standing there, a lot of people thought it was going to be somebody besides me. But, I already

knew it was going to be me or I knew that was his intent. Of course, it was General [Carl E.] Mundy's call, because General Mundy was still the Commandant at that time. So, he had convinced General Mundy, and I think General [Richard D.] Hearnly maybe came out for that ceremony. I'm trying to remember if he was there. Some senior General came out for that to represent the Commandant.

Q: Hearnly was the ACMC [Assistant Commandant].

General Howell: So, somehow a lot of people got it in their minds that it was this other officer from HQ, who was going to have that job, instead of me, but I ended up getting approved. It was a quite a delay--I guess I went through the litany of having some letters come in that had to be reviewed by the IG [Inspector General] and finally got slowed up because of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was being sort of stalled by the Congress, just to harass the President. Because it was a Republican Congress and my name was attached to his for the approval. And so, we didn't get approved until the last day of the fiscal year. And so, I actually was officially declared, I think, on the first of October of 1995, as the Commander of Marine Forces Pacific. And I got to keep that for over two years, until the Spring of '98. So, that was a great experience. I was very fortunate.

Q: Who was your deputy there? And in what capacity did you use him?

General Howell: I brought in, initially, [Emil R.] "Buck" Bedard, came up to be my deputy and he...

Q: I believe he was a brigadier General too, at that time.

General Howell: Yes. He was a brigadier General at the time and very aggressive, a real character, great guy. He was totally loyal to me [and] sort of pumped up about his experience in Somalia. He'd done a heck of a job there and he was still full of himself in that regard. But we found out, that we were so large, we were such a big outfit, and we had such a challenge, my main mission was to solidify our position as a component command.

Q: You were in a variety of CINCs [Commander in Chiefs].

General Howell: Yes, in THREE different CinCs. CinCPac, CinC Cent, and United Nations

Forces Korea--he was the Commander of US Forces Korea and the Commander-in-Chief of United Nations Forces Korea. And, you know, there's an acronym for...

Q: Isn't it Combined Forces Command, CFC.

General Howell: Yes, and so, they all were wondering how we were going to do this.

Q: They're all on the edge. I mean Korea is on the edge and CentCom is.

General Howell: We thought we were going to war with Korea. We thought we were going to war with Iran while I was there and we thought we were going to war with Iraq when I was there. And we had to do some real battle planning, and I mean real time, even though we did regular battle planning anyway. And the first thing the Commandant told me, my new boss, the new Commandant Krulak, he said, "You know, you got this thing going Beak, but you can't expect one more Marine from me to help you on this thing. You've got to make do with what you have." And one thing that came to my mind, that we had a handful of some reserve, senior reserve officers, most of them colonels, had one General officer, Bobby Hollingsworth who was assigned to me. When he drilled he came out as an acting deputy also. And these guys were great. There was a guy named, Al Wey, he was a reserve colonel, aviator, who was from New Mexico. Talking and working with them and seeing and having our Ops [Operations] guys commend them for how good of work they did when they were out there. And some of those guys, during their drill period they come out there full time. But, a lot of these guys were lawyers or had their own businesses, and they loved doing this. So, we could get some of these guys up to 180 days a year.

A lot of them would take it. I mean they would come out there and work. And so, I inquired and found out, at least at that time, I don't know if it has changed, but at that time, in the Marine Corps there were people who were active reserve people, [who] would work their way up and get promoted. And once you made senior rank, it was very difficult to find a billet to work you in, as a lieutenant colonel or colonel. You were basically promoted out of a place where you could stay as an active officer in the reserves. These guys were seeking an opportunity to still stay in and have a viable and responsible job. And so, I went to the Commander of Marine Reserve Forces, General [Thomas L.] Wilkerson at that time, and we made a deal where I went out and recruited and got, at the time I was trying to get 200 reserve officers to come drill with us. Never got that number, but we got a big, got augmented by about 60 or 70 of these fellows. And some of them, we would get for half of a year at a time, others we would only get for 20 or 30 days a year. But,

what we did is we sort of made them planning experts. We took our plans and put most of them in our plans shop and they became expert war planners for the different CINC's that we dealt with. So, I had a group that were Central Command guys and a group that were Korea guys, and then a smaller group that were for Pacific that were really, that was sort of what we'd been doing all along. And so, so anytime we were going to have an exercise with Central Command, and go to Tampa, and set up a command post, those guys would come on active duty and help on that thing.

Q: Like for Operation Internal Look, and what others?

General Howell: Yes, and if we went out to Ulchi Focus Lens in Korea, those guys would come with us on that thing. And so, it really was a tremendous help to both our ops and our planning to have those people, because they were good. You know, they were seasoned and they really wanted to do this. They really knew what they were doing. And so, it really helped us tremendously. It wasn't the whole solution. I could have used a lot more, but we managed to hold that together and make it work.

Q: How did making FMFPac a component command change things there?

General Howell: You know, FMFPac had had a reputation for years of being sort of a "sleepy hollow," and a great twilight tour for a lot of senior officers to go out there and spend their last years in the Marine Corps, enjoying Hawaii. That all changed when we became a component command. We were hustling and working. Going to all these exercises, and of course, CINCPac still had its demands and had exercises too. And we participated in these. The Thai exercise-Cobra Gold was an exercise that sucked a lot of energy out of us. But, we had to do that and we worked with Indonesia and the Philippines. We had exercises with them. We had big exercises in Australia. Went down there a couple of times and so, it was go-go-go and exciting times. And I tell you, those reserve officers really were a great help in that regard. At the same time, our staff just worked their buns off supporting all this planning, these exercises, and the war planning that went on. You asked, what did Buck do? Buck was a great player. And when he left, Ralph E. "Chip" Parker, who came in to be my deputy later, both those guys really helped fill voids for me. I just couldn't be everywhere at once. So, I basically went to high-level meetings and was gone a lot going to CINCPac meetings, CINC Korea, and CINCent...

Q: Kind of like what you did for General Krulak when he had MarForPac?

General Howell: Yes. For instance, we thought that we were going to go to war with Iraq there in my last year. And I had actually to send an advance party out to Kuwait and we set up a command post out there. Advance party and Chip Parker went out there and spent something like six weeks out there as a MarForPac Forward orchestrating because we had Marine MEF units out there sort up setting up and getting ready to go to war. And so, that was a big deal. The deputies really played key roles and really worked hard. And actually brought in the commanding General of the base over at Kaneohe; used him to come in and fill in as a deputy when the actual deputies were gone. And so, had to use the General officers, we were stretched. Those guys were on the go all the time.

Q: How did you approach the concept that a component command is really just a force provider for the war fighters?

General Howell: I might have frustrated our guys because even as a MarForPac commander I told our people, "Our war fighters are the MEF's. They're the ones who are going to fight the battles. We are going to support them. And whether you and I like it or not, I am now a logistics officer. My main purpose in life is to provide them with the wherewithal to fight and that's the beans and bullets, and people, and equipment and all that stuff." And so, that's what we focused on. That's what I tried to keep our focus on and let the MEF's doing the war planning, you know the actual operations planning, and they were very good at it. Of course, I MEF was a key element for both a Korean war and for the war in Central Command, and they worked hard.

Q: Who had I MEF in those days?

General Howell: Well, [Anthony C.] Zinni had it initially and just did a great job. And Carl Fulford had it after him and he did a great job. Those guys were both just fantastic. And out in WestPac, III MEF, of course, had to focus on Korea. But really, I MEF was really the war fighter that came into the Korean thing and III MEF augmented them. III MEF was sort of the "float," and they would go to sea with their people for an amphibious landing. But the land army was really I MEF. They were supposed to come in and actually be the main force there. And so, I MEF really worked their tail off to have both a plan for the Korean and for Central Command, both for Iraq and Iran. And we planned for a lot of different war fighting scenarios. We thought we might have to go to war with Iran while I was there. But we did a lot of war planning on how we were going to

do that. And I tell you right now, that would be a big challenge trying to put a force in there and to fight. That country is huge.

Q: Iran?

General Howell: Yes and the terrain is wicked. And so, we had some plans on how we would do that and I'm not going to talk about that you know. They were viable and we were going to be big players in that.

Q: Did you ever consider the possibility of fighting in both Korea and CentCom, how the Marine Corps would handle that.

General Howell: The plan was to hold in one place and a fight in the other. That's the strategy. If it was a two theatre war, we would fight one of them vigorously and just have a holding force in the other. Hold while they could. The thing about Korea that people don't realize is that the South Korean army is very powerful. They can handle themselves very well, they can defend Korea very effectively. They would need us to go in and take North Korea, but they could hold their own holding South Korea. The only problem is they are within heavy artillery range, Seoul is, from north of the DMZ, from rockets and what have you. And so the thorny issue is that Seoul is so damn naked to an invading force coming out of the north. It's just that they [North Korean Army] could be downtown in a heartbeat. That's the problem with that. They're just so close to the border.

Q: You had mentioned that you thought you might go to war with North Korea? What was that deal?

General Howell: It was almost a yearly occurrence when the North Koreans would start moving forces down to the DMZ and down in that area without talking about, without telling anybody. And when our Intel [Intelligence] would see it, and we would see them moving very heavy forces, of course, more times than not they were in some kind of an exercise or what have you. But, I know they tested us, just to see what we would do. So, we'd basically react very seriously and end up going up, taking our battle staffs up to Korea. I was the Commander of Combined Marine Forces Korea under the UN Commander-in-Chief. And so, in all of our exercises and then when we did our littoral war planning, my battle headquarters and I would go to Korea and fall in on the

ROK [Republic of Korea] Marine Headquarters, which was in Palan , which is about thirty clicks [km] south of Seoul. They have a combat headquarters building in the side of a mountain. They were building it when we were there. It was not finished while I was there, but I think it is finished now. But, we would actually go to their headquarters and set up our battle staff, and the ROK Marines would support our activities. [Actually] the Commandant of the ROK Marine Corps would become my deputy Combined Marines Commander. And so, that's the way it worked.

Q: That's interesting. And all the rest of the time he was in charge of Marine Forces Korea? Anytime the US Marines came in there, the US took command, whether there was a war or not?

General Howell: Yes. On paper, yes, in reality, no. And they understood that.

Q: But it was on paper?

General Howell: I think it was on paper that there was the possibility that he could be the commander if Marines were not there. But, we worked it so that that never really occurred.

Q: Did you see that MarForPac needed to go in a different direction from the way it was going when General Krulak had it? Or did it need to be enhanced in one regard or another, changed?

General Howell: I tried my best to fulfill his vision.

Q: Which was?

General Howell: To establish maturity and an acceptance by the CINC's that we were a viable Component Commander.

Q: You could really do what the Marine Corps advertised?

General Howell: Yes. From the first commander's meeting in Tampa, Florida, with the commander in chief—[General Binney Peay, USA].

Q: Well, General Zinni took his place.

General Howell: Yes, but the first guy was Army, really a fine guy, tanker. He was very kind, very nice, but the staff was very skeptical. It was very Army heavy. Very tight Army-Air Force and those guys, there's almost an open animosity and cynicism about "these Marines" and "they can't really help us and what the heck." So, all that was there and we really had to try to sell ourselves and show what we offered. The Army had these big heavy units and they had all this firepower, and so they were wondering "What can you give me or offer?" And once more, the reason why, the Marines have TacAir-- the MEF, when we would present what a MEF brings in F-18's and Harriers and A-6's and all that, I mean that got the CINC's attention.

Q: It's got the aviation piece.

General Howell: It's the aviation. And I told them, "You don't get that without everybody else." They wanted just to get the TacAir and give it to the Air Force, "We don't need the rest of you." And we told them, "That's not the way it works. This is a component command, and when we send you the MEF, it is the whole enchilada. And if you want that TacAir too, you're going to get that MEF too."

But their staffs, I tell you it was just like pulling teeth. It was not easy. I ran into a very similar, but not quite, [situation in Korea]. [There] seemed to be a more mature or better acceptance in Korea, because III MEF was so close, and Marines exercise there so much, that they realized that Marines could help; traditionally, because of the Marines participation in the Korean War and all that kind of stuff. So, I like to think that by the time I left there was more of a collegial acceptance by everyone.

The CINC's were always kind. I never had a CINC who was not courteous and not accepting of what we were doing, however reluctantly. But, their staffs--our staff officers would just get so upset because of the way that they were jacked around by the CINC's staff officers, particularly in CINCent. But, by the time I left there was more of a collegial [environment] and more of working together. One thing, we got more Marines on those staffs. That always helps. It just hadn't been that many up until that time. So, there is more of a Marine presence and so that really helped in that regard. And so, we sent some liaison officers, and they were down there almost constantly helping and working. And it was at the staff level, where things get done. And so, with the Marine presence, they started seeing where we could help. The Air Force element of the Central Command had a big CPX war fighting exercise there, at Tyndall [AFB]. That's where they do a lot of their war fighting exercises. They have sort of a CPX center there, and we went to those. And I'd take my battle staff, a small one, but we would go play in those.

Q: Was that the Internal Look exercises?

General Howell: Yes. The Air Force would have this huge [contingent], I mean hundreds of airmen and officers, running this thing. And we would come in there, and the Army would have a big thing. So, we would play in that, and get Marine TacAir in there. That's where there was always a battle. They wanted all of our sorties, and we wouldn't give them to them. And we would have to work through that. But, because we played, because we went, because I was there, they had a Marine three star at these things, they finally--they respect rank, so they would finally start looking forward to us being there, and being a part of it. And we helped them. And so, there was a better comfort level at the working level, working together and acceptance that "Hey, the Marines do have something to offer, and they can help us in these things." And particularly, when this thing blew up and we thought that we were going to go back to war with Iraq. You know, [Saddam] Hussein had moved some forces down into southern Iraq, and so all a sudden, the Army and the Air Force put some advance headquarters down there. And my people came and said, "Sir, we just don't know how we can do this. But, we're probably needed." I said, "You're darn right. We've got to send an advanced headquarters there and play with these guys." Otherwise, they'll say "Well--see you Marines? You said you could do it but you couldn't [impersonation inflecting cruelly mocking and sarcastic tone of CINC staff officer]." And that's when Chip Parker went out there, and stood up there. He sat out there in that heat, in that sand, out in the middle of nowhere in northern Kuwait for a long time, just because we had to do that. We had to be there.

That was just to make sure that they knew that we were serious and that we would play ball with them. And every time there was a scare, you know with the North Koreans, I would come out there with my battle staff. We'd be ready to help plan and to prepare for combat. MEF would send their reps and the MEF commander would come. We showed them that we were serious and that we were there to play. And so, we started working in Korea, and once more it's classified stuff, but we started working some alternatives to the old standard battle plan of how we would go into North Korea. That really got their attention and started getting them thinking that, "Hey, maybe these Marines really can enhance this thing, and help us throw a new wrinkle in this battle plan that could save a lot of lives, and make this thing come across a lot quicker." So, I was very excited about that. After I had been in command for a little over a year, General Krulak came out on a visit. And it seemed like it was around Christmas, he was on a WestPac visit the troops thing, and we had him over for breakfast. He and Zandi were there, and they were coming through Hawaii visiting. He pulled me aside, he said, "Beak? I need a favor." And I said, "Whatever you want, sir." He said,

“I’m looking at my slate and we’re really hurting for aviation Generals.” And he said, “Could I talk you into staying longer as the commander of MarForPac, past two years to help me fill that gap?” I said, “Well I can do that.”

Janel: [Shouting from another room]: Throw me into that briar patch!

General Howell: So, that was a wonderful thing and a wonderful compliment.

Janel: Thanksgiving.

General Howell: Yes, it was Thanksgiving. That’s right. Of ’95, I guess, when he asked that. And so, that’s why we ended up staying beyond, you know it was ’95-’96, 97, ’98, to May of ’98.

Q: So, what you all were doing, the way I see it, because MarForPac played such an important role in the Global War on Terror [GWOT], you were laying the foundation, flexing and developing the muscles that would be used when we did go to war real time.

General Howell: Yes.

Q: Any indications that war was on the horizon?

General Howell: I didn’t see it at that time. At that time we were literally battle planning for going to war with Iraq, and invading Iraq. And we had a plan and it’s very similar to the plan that was exercised in that war. And so, you know a lot of people, it’s funny you see in the news, people talking about, “They actually were planning for this thing a year before it happened [clueless and shocked inflection in voice].” You know like there was a conspiracy. Hell, we were planning for that thing eight years before it started. And, they just keep working those plans. You have to do that. And so, I’m just very proud of them. You know, when the whole thing happened, I knew the Marines would be there and ready and on the go.

Q: Were you surprised by the way they did anything or did you see in it what you all had been planning?

General Howell: I wasn’t surprised at all. The Marines were always covering the Iran border,

going up that side while the Army made the big move, up the left. And then, of course, coming down through Turkey, and really I was very personally disappointed when the 4th Division was not allowed to go through Turkey. That hurt that whole thing. And that allowed a lot of bandits to get away, and to filter into Syria and all that kind of stuff. That could have been a big help, to have a blocking force, sort of a “hammer and an anvil” type of maneuver. Having that big division fill that void and press from the other side. And that hurt that whole thing.

I thought that that was an excellent plan, and that they executed it beautifully. TacAir did a great job as a part of that. I think we realized that in Desert Storm we just bombed the heck out of them before, we were waiting to get the Army into Saudi and get them positioned, and that’s why it took so damn long to get that attack going. And we realized that we just didn’t need to wait that long. And so, they surprised everybody by moving when they did, when we thought we were going to be in. That didn’t surprise me at all. I thought they’d cut through them like a knife through butter.

Q: Like they did.

General Howell: Like they did. That was no surprise to me.

Q: It sounds like some of the things that you were doing with the Air Force bore fruit because they saw fit, in Iraq, without hardly any fighting or fussing over it to let the Marines fight the kind of war that their doctrine preaches, let Marine air support Marines on the ground.

General Howell: Yes.

Q: And even gave the 3rd Wing—they were a maneuver element there to cover the right flank of the Marine Corps.

General Howell: But you know more about it than me. That battle plan, that wasn’t part of the plan that I remember. You know, that was all worked and refined over the years. Tommy Franks and his staff, working with his component commanders, had to plan according to what he had. So, all those things change a little bit and are tweaked. So, I’m not going to say anymore about the plans themselves because they are classified, but it was very similar to what happened.

Q: Good enough. What else happened of consequence while you had MarForPac?

General Howell: A couple things, key events that were not complicated things but early on after I'd been in command there, it seemed like, I can't remember what the date was, we had the two Marines and the corpsman rape that schoolgirl in Okinawa. And that just raised a firestorm in Okinawa. You know since the days when I was a lieutenant all the way until that time, the Okinawa population really doesn't want us there. And they think the Japanese have always made them the whipping boy for the American presence by putting all the Marines and Army, and Air Force there in Okinawa, whereas, there are not many up on Honshu, on the Japanese mainland. And so, that just brought that to a head. There were just a lot of demonstrations and an uproar to get the Marines out of there and all of that. General Krulak saw that, he realized that, and before I could do anything he said, "I'm going to Okinawa." And so, he sort of took that himself, because he felt that that was a Marine issue and so he went out there and made apologies and all that. I initially, the CINC was talking about how he and Krulak—I was in his office [CINC's] almost daily getting my butt chewed about, "You Marines and you Marines and you Marines." He forgot one of them was sailor.

Q: Admiral [Joseph W.] Prueher?

General Howell: Yes, Admiral Prueher, Joe Prueher was commander by then. It's funny and I can, I hope that he would agree that this actually happened, about the third time I was down there, some other incident happened, and he was threatening to pull the Marines off of Okinawa. He said, "I'm just going to take you all out of there. The heck with you." Something else occurred up at another [place], not as serious as a rape, but some incident where a Marine got drunk. And we were getting all these reports and there was a lot of sensitivity. So, anytime a Marine did anything, you know ran a stoplight, Admiral Prueher got upset about it. And so, he calls me down to his office, he was there at Camp Smith. His headquarters was right there in the Marine [base at] Camp Smith. And so, I go to his office and he said, "I am sick and tired [of] your Marines doing this and your Marines are doing that and your Marines..." And I stopped him, and I think I really shocked him because I said, "Admiral, one correction." I said, "Those aren't MY Marines, those are YOUR Marines. Those Marines belong to you. They belong to CINCPac. And so, quit calling them 'MY Marines.' They are your Marines and they are doing great service for you out there, holding down that flank." And he just went [jaw drops or shocked facial expression] and you know he had not ever thought about that. And so, he sort of cooled off. It was amazing; every time he could he'd take a shot at Krulak. Every time, when Krulak would come down there, he would take a shot at

[Admiral] Prueher. They had a thing, I don't know...

Q: I wonder what the source of that was.

General Howell: You'd have to ask them. But they, there was rivalry there, between those two men they loved to throw darts at each other. And some of it was friendly and some of it was not. But, I felt like I was caught in the middle of a lot of a personal, I don't want to say grudge, but personal animosity or something between those two men that I found myself being caught in the middle of. And I'd just have to be the pin cushion and get jabbed, you know. But that was a big deal and that started a big push to move MCAS Futenma out. You know, Futenma is right in the middle of the southern part of Okinawa there. So, they wanted to get it out of there because there are planes coming in and they come in right over Naha, right over that ridge, and land there and all that. That was a big push and so from that time on we started planning and Admiral Prueher and his staff were in the middle of it. And we worked continuously on plans, trying to work with the Japanese and the Okinawans on moving Futenma Field up north, by Camp Schwab. And there were all kinds of options: a floating base out there, digging one out of the mountains out there, I mean there were just all kinds of options. And low and behold, the thing that we made some agreements on in 1997 were still, hadn't been totally agreed upon until about a year ago. About five months, I read in the paper, where they have now made a deal where they are going to build a base, or a landing field, up by Camp Schwab--out on the reefs [phonetic]. And then, almost in a heartbeat, they say they are going to move the Marines to Guam.

Q: Yes, that's a big deal now.

General Howell: And so, that whole thing, that whole dynamic has been going on since I was a Commander Marine Forces Pacific. It's been, that was back in the late '90's, here we are eight or nine years later, that's the way things happen. We thought they were immediately going to happen then, they are still trying to get things agreed on between the US and Japanese and the status of forces agreements and all that.

Q: Status of forces, the role of forces in the Pacific, is that changing, can you discuss that?

General Howell: Yes, that's another thing--under CINCPac, we have a status of forces agreement with the Japanese on maintaining a US presence to DEFEND Japan against threats. And they, of

course, look toward Red China and to Russia; they still don't trust the Russians. The main reason that we have U.S. Forces, you might think they are occupying Japan, they are there really to provide a defense force for the defense of Japan. So, Japan does not have to build up their military because the U.S. is there. It's always been that strategic goal. So, they don't have to get into a war fighting posture. And you see a lot of that changing; they are talking about having a stronger defense force and all that. That training we did, when I had the mid-air [mid-air collision] was to help them get better capability. And that caused a lot of--the Japanese public had been well conditioned to be antiwar and antimilitary and they get very nervous about that kind of stuff. At the same time, they are not too happy to have the Americans but they have gotten used to that and as long as their own people don't get into war fighting that's fine with them. That's a pot that is simmering all the time and we had the commander of U.S. Forces Japan, was another commander under CINCPac, who we'd always have to deal with. Any U.S. troop operations or whatever had to be approved by U.S. Forces Japan and work with them/ coordinate. So, I would make trips over to Japan and U.S. Forces Japan was in Yokota--Headquarters downtown Tokyo, Japanese Self-Defense Force. I had to go up there on a regular basis and visit and pay calls to the commanders of the Japanese Forces. And meet with them and nod and go through the rituals you have to go through and maintaining liaison and that kind of stuff. I had those kinds of meetings and you'd hear all these threats that they are going to cut our budgets and they're going to ask the U.S. to leave and all of that. It never happened, but they were always asking and always feeling you out-- "Are you guys really going to stay? Or are you going to leave?"

Q: The Japanese are interesting people, what was your impression?

General Howell: Oh they are. They are. They are just wonderful friends and very courteous and very good hosts. At the same time, you talk about cultural differences, they just aren't like us. They don't think like we do, they don't act like we do, and I think they look down their nose at us. They still think we are a bunch of heathens.

Q: But the relations went along fine?

General Howell: Oh, they went great. They had a couple of guys that were U.S. Forces Japan--Richard Myers, was an Air Force two-star and then a three-star as U.S. Forces Japan and then became the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Air Forces Pacific, there in Hawaii and then later went to, I guess, Space Command and then ended up being Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. We got to be

good friends. He was there in Hawaii for a year with U.S. Air Forces Pacific. And we played golf together quite a bit, he with his son. They are just really nice people.

Q: MarForPac was a big organization, how did it stack up compared to the other services?

General Howell: It was sort of interesting that I was a Marine three-star and Marine Forces Pacific, in our command we had 80,000 Marines, peace time. During war time it would be even more. The Army Command in the Pacific was a, he was a three-star too, General [Robert L.] Ord and I think the Army had something like 15,000-20,000 people in the Pacific. The Air Force has a four-star Commander-in-Chief; Air Force maybe had 10,000 people in WestPac. And that's what is amazing, that you have all these Generals all over the damn place. We used to call the U.S. Air Forces Command Headquarters at Hickam [AFB], I used to call that the Taj Mahal. You'd go into their headquarters and it was just a beautiful place that had a big courtyard in the middle with plants and fountains and you'd go into their offices and there would just be acres of carpeting and air-conditioning. And all you'd see were these big mahogany desks and all these Air Force Generals parading around and just belching platitudes. It was hilarious. It was hilarious.

Q: What was your set-up like at Camp Smith, it wasn't too shabby.

General Howell: I had a big office because Camp Smith was an old converted Navy hospital that had been a Navy hospital in the Second World War that a lot of wounded Marines and Sailors spent time in-- General Wilson recuperated there from his wounds. As a matter of fact, his office, the FMF and then the MarForPac Commander's office, he said there used to be an officer's ward there and so we were in an old hospital that had been closed down. And the Marines had been located down in these wooden sheds down in Pearl Harbor, and when the hospital closed they asked to get that. Well, the Navy saw this and said, "Wait a minute." So they made a deal where the Marines would take over the camp and make it a Marine base and host the CINCPac; host him and his staff. And that's the way that it's worked all this time.

Q: That's interesting that it's a Marine base but has this big Navy command in it.

General Howell: A Marine quarters and a Marine base that hosts the Commander-in-Chief Pacific and his Headquarters up there. But, that's worked out very well. That was a neat place. However, it was quite old and maintenance on that place was not easy. But, I loved being there because of

the history and all that. It's funny that all the offices up there had their own bathrooms, all up and down the hallways because they used to be hospital rooms. Everybody got spoiled because everybody had their own heads, you know, right by their offices. That was funny.

Q: You mentioned something; a floating air base off of Okinawa, General Krulak had talked about a mobile off-shore base that seemed to me like it was a sea base, which is the new vision for the Navy/Marine Corps now.

General Howell: Yes. I was briefed on it and it was a notion and there was a proposal to build a huge metal floating gargantuan ship that could be a landing strip and underneath you would have living for a MEF. And it had the wherewithal-- you could actually take it anywhere, you could just tow it. You could pull it close to wherever the contingency was and be a base of operations for war fighting from the air and as well as support of activities and you could have docks too. And there were people who were really serious about that notion.

Q: Like an oil platform. Was that his idea?

General Howell: I think it was an idea. You know, another thing, and I am sure that this is part of his oral history, he really wanted the Marine Corps to start thinking of the Marine Corps to the future and coming up with ideas of how the Marine Corps should be relevant in the next twenty or thirty years. He basically had the whole Marine Corps stand down for a couple of days, and had every Marine in the Marine Corps, to meet together and come up with ideas of how we could improve the Marine Corps and get us ready for the future. All the way down to privates, and have people meet and discuss, get some briefings, get some notions, but then say, "What are your ideas? What do you think?" And brought all that in and he put that together, and I'm trying to remember what the name of that was, but that was an incredible event. That's the first time I'm ever aware of the whole entire Marine Corps actually, throughout the world standing down as a Marine Corps and had everybody, all Marines, sit down and get sort of a standard briefing of, "This is what I'm trying to do. This is what I'm asking you to help me with. Now what are your ideas?" And he'd gather all of these ideas. And that's when they came up with the new Marine War Fighting Center.

Q: Up in Quantico?

General Howell: Yes. I'm trying to think who some of the guys were and they were to test new

weapons and test new ideas. And he gave them some money and other support. There were a lot of people really upset because there were some commands over there that thought that that was their job. And he was trying to speed things up. Part of his frustration was the minute you come up with an idea for a weapon, it takes ten years to field a new weapon from inception. And by that time it's fielded, it is usually not relevant. And he wanted to OODA [observe, orient, decide, act; a decision cycle developed by Col John Boyd, USAF], he wanted to get ahead of that and you know get something out in a year or two, once you have a good idea. So he set up this special [organization]; he pulled one of the guys out in WestPac, pulled him in to be one of those guys. He was another one of these thinkers and doers and had all these wild ideas. I regret that I can't remember his name.

One idea--I think that big floating base was one of those things. But people talked about it and briefed it and I know in Congress there were some people who were supporting that and wanted to put money against it. There was an idea, that was one thing, and there was an idea that maybe the Camp Schwab strip could be one of those things. Sort of floating out there, you could use it, and if you ever had to take it, you could pick it up and pull it someplace. You never had to leave.

Q: The only problem is that if you ever hit it with a rocket or a missile or something there you go.

General Howell: But it was unsinkable. The thing is so big and with the compartments and everything; it's like an iceberg. You could torpedo it all day and you're not going to sink it.

Q: Along those same lines, in the time period, in the article that you wrote, you mention something called the rapid deployment squads; I was interested in that because of the current interest in distributed operations.

General Howell: Okay, that was part of that thing; in my mind we were tasked, the different commands in the MEF's were tasked to come up with a notion of having squads that could just go very quickly to an area. Of how to send squads of highly specialized small groups of Marines who were capable of getting into an area, sort of like reconnaissance, but have a lot of clout. You'll have the wherewithal of using satellites and that kind of communications to call in arms on a place. That would either bring firepower, in a local area without being seen and to maneuver and that kind of stuff. I think that's what that was. That was part of this new war fighting team and one of those notions. And so, they were working it. I don't know if that came to be or not.

Q: UAV's [unmanned aerial vehicles], and VMU's [UAV squadrons] stood up. Did they start while you were there?

General Howell: I think we already had it. They had them at Camp Pendleton and I think they had been in Desert Storm. Didn't we use UAV's in Desert Storm?

Q: I think so, maybe some variant of them.

General Howell: And so, it was a matter of more emphasis and they might have put a det out in Okinawa. I don't remember. I know I remember visiting UAV guys and them flying a Pioneer around and they showed me how they did it. There were all kinds of test of robotic mine clearing devices that you could maneuver a vehicle. I saw demonstrations of a Hummer [HMMWV] that was setup so it could be driven by a fellow a mile or two away. It could drive into an area and then you could attach to that some kind of mine clearing operation. So, it blows up instead of people and that kind of stuff. So, those are all some of the different weapons. There were a lot of really eye-watering wonderful air-to-air weaponry that was developed and started to be [employed]. We had the capability of putting that on our F-18's. A lot of very classified stuff. I don't know if they're still doing that. I would imagine they are.

Q: New missiles for air-to-air like the AMRAAM [advanced medium range air-air missile].

General Howell: Well they had some weapons that looked like AMRAAMs that had enhanced capabilities. And so, there was just a lot of stuff. That's all part of it, money and a lot of it is "How much of it can you really get? You know, when you need it?" and that kind of stuff. Of course, with the war that we have now where it's more of a one-on-one, people type of operations, those kinds of weapons are very expensive so I don't know if they really have the money to buy that stuff.

Q: UAV's are really important. What's your perspective on the future of manned flight?

General Howell: Piloted aircraft are probably, on their way out [solemn vocal tone], in some aspects of warfare. You and I are antiques of the past. I personally think that there is always going to be a need for a person out there, with the flexibility of the human mind. You know, I've spent

time now with being a part of NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration], and there is a very powerful group in NASA who thinks that all space exploration should be robotic. That you don't need people out there...

Q: What's your view on that?

General Howell: I'm convinced that you've got to have people out there.

Q: Why?

General Howell: Because the human mind--well okay, an example: the Mars Rover. The Mars Rovers, in the first month, their movement and what they saw, one man could do in one day. It's just that simple. So, all those wonderful things that they've discovered with that Rover, you know crawling around on the desert floor and looking around, one man could have covered that area in one or two days and reported back and then gone on and done other things. It just shows you that robotics are wonderful but they're not close to having the capability of the "human computer" along with what it is connected to, the flexibility to do things and to react to new experiences. You know anything a computer or a robot does, you've got to program it to be prepared to react and things happen all the time that surprise you. And the human mind can filter and cope, and change its direction depending on the terrain and the situation. Robots really have a difficult time. They have to be very sophisticated to be even considered as an alternative.

Q: What do you think about UAV's doing close air support [CAS]?

General Howell: It depends on the risk. It depends on "Do you want to put people at risk or not? What's important?" If you have a static situation and you have a robot flying around with something and you have somebody controlling it, he can bring that weapon to bear on a target: Boom! Okay, why not? But, then if you have a dynamic where people are moving, smoke and you need someone--the problem with robots, if we can design a robot somebody can design a way of defeating that robot and jamming that communication. And so, that's the nice thing about people is they know how to overcome those things in a heartbeat. You can always go without communications and see what's going on then use your best judgment of how to deal with it.

Q: Isn't there the issue of public support too?

General Howell: You got it. That's a big part of it. One reason why NASA gets the funding it gets is because it's sexy. Because it is the human element and the risk, the danger to people makes it very exciting and gives it everybody's attention.

Q: So, it's true that people can identify with it. Would that carry over to CAS? I mean if you're a grunt on the ground isn't that a boost to morale that you have a buddy overhead ready to wallop the enemy. A robotic plane would just be another piece of gear, like an artillery piece?

General Howell: It would be another artillery piece. But, if it did the job then they would probably be satisfied, I think. I just don't know if it could really do the job. It would have the flexibility and the endurance to really be available when you really need it, and to react to unusual situations. I think robotic stuff is good. I think it is worthy of pursuit, but I just don't think you can really replace the human element, just like trying to get a bunch of robots to go fight on the ground too. Why don't you have robots fighting for you instead of the infantryman? See that doesn't make a lot of sense, but people think if you do it in an airplane that it makes a lot of sense. Well, think about it. There is a human element in combat that you cannot get rid of because that is what combat is: people killing each other.

Q: What are your thoughts on Marine TacAir integration, in that a lot of Marine F/A-18 squadrons might be serving on Navy big deck [CVs] carriers?

General Howell: Turning our tactical air over to the Navy concerns me because the Navy is a wonderful fighting force but they have other priorities, and CAS is not one of them. That really bothers me, that if we're going to put a big slug of our TacAir under their command, that our priorities might change and they are going to evolve. And that is very scary. Plus the carrier—any time that carrier is under threat, it's going to move out of the way and that's really when you need CAS, is when there is a threat.

Q: Were there any countries that you sought out to enhance relations with while you were at MarForPac?

General Howell: Well, part of my job, and I had some staff officers who really insisted that I go visit these countries and other armed forces, they said, "Unless you do it, we can't really work with

them. They want the big shot to come in there and, at least, meet-n-greet. Then they know that we are serious about being partners.” So, I took it very seriously and I made visits to a lot of places where we had allies and people that we wanted to work with. And, of course, I made visits to almost all the countries in the Persian Gulf, who were our allies; [I visited] Oman, UAE [United Arab Emirates], and Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. What to me was a great experience, a part of that, we had the *Boxer* [LHD-4], it was up in the port there, in Jordan. So, I went and visited those Marines, and they were out maneuvering out in the Jordanian desert, so I went out in the desert and visited with them and spent the night with them out in the desert. Then [I] went up to the capital of Jordan to pay a call on the chief-of-staff of the Jordanian army. While I was up there they had a tour set up for me to go down the Jordan River and see the minefields and all that stuff. He said, “Would you mind if we changed your plan?” I said, “You’re my host, whatever you want.” He said, “Well, King Hussein, his Royal Majesty, would like for you to join him to observe some maneuvers out in the field and then have lunch with him.” I said, “I can do that. That’d be okay.” So, I actually went down to one of their military bases there in Amman and got on a helicopter. [I] met his son, who later became the King of Jordan, and they took me out in the desert where they were maneuvering. And, one thing we were doing was, we had a lot of 105 [105 mm howitzer] ammunition that was old and wasn’t going to be used by the Marine Corps. And every time we would go into Jordan, sort of part of the payment of using their port and their exercises, we would take them a bunch of old 105 ammo and they would use that for exercises and for their training. And so, they were very thankful for that. They really appreciated it. And so, I went up on this hill overlooking the desert, where they had these tents and carpets down, and got to meet him and sit with him and watch. He was very gracious. Then he wanted to come and see the Marines who were exercising, and the Marines knew he was going to do that. I didn’t because I wasn’t attached to them. You know, we had a MEB [Marine expeditionary brigade] out there and the MEB commander. And so, he got in his Land Rover and I got in my Hummer and we went down to where the Marines were. And they gave him a command brief and it was really well done. And he met a bunch of those officers and he was a very “people person.” [He] loved to meet and laugh, and talk to each [of the] Marine officers. Then, he said, “Would you join me for lunch at one of my headquarters?” I said, “Sure.” So, he gets in that Land Rover and WHAM! across the desert he goes. I get into my Hummer, with my people, and it’s all we can do just to keep his dust trail in sight. I mean he’s moving and he’s driving it too and when he got into a helicopter he flew the helicopter.

Q: Really.

General Howell: Oh yes, he did it all. And here this man's dying, you know. He had cancer but he still was active as hell, [he died] about a year later. We end up coming over a hill and here's this--it looked like in the movies, like a foreign legion base. You know, this base out in the middle of the desert with the buildings and the fortress and all that. And drive up there and he's already out on the parade ground with a big formation of the troops there. It's always interesting; I stood out there and watched for a while, on the side. All the officers in the, I guess it was a brigade, would have the opportunity to come up to him personally and talk to him, and I think they were giving him requests. They were taking notes and they would come and sort of bow before him and kiss his hand or talk. And they would, I think, ask for favors or what have you and he would listen to them. And I think that part of that was to declare their loyalty to him, too. It was a big deal. We moved from there, while he was still doing that, to--they had a regular base there with buildings and all that, barracks, but they had set up these big huge, beautiful Bedouin tents. And they had these wonderful Persian rugs down and all that, and you go in there and it's really quite large. You know, you could get several hundred people inside this thing, but they had set up one of these low little seats, chairs with a little table between them and right in the middle against one of the sides, and then all the rest of it was sort of open, for people to stand. And he comes there with this entourage and goes over to that chair and one of his aides came to me and said, "His majesty would like you to join him." So, I go over there with him and we sit down in these two chairs. All my guys and all his officers are all standing around. It was just like out of the movies, this Arabian, old, ancient, man with the white costume, and the scarf, and all that kind of stuff with a big sword in his belt comes out and he's got this very bronze, highly decorated pitcher and two cups. And, it's like cloisonné, really highly decorated things. And he comes out and he pours one, and we had a third one and he tasted it, you know he's showing that it is not poisoned. And, [he] puts that in his pocket and then he pours the two cups and offered them to us. And we take them and it is tea, very good hot tea, and it was quite sweet. It was very tasty. And so, we drink and we chat. And he's thanking me for the ammunition and how much he appreciates it. And I tell him, "Well, anything we can do." It's just a very polite conversation and chatting. Of course, he knows English better than I do. And then, he asked for a little bit more, so I asked for a little bit more. And then, I'm just following him, this is all. I'm just trying to keep from embarrassing myself. And he ends up, he dumps out his excess on the floor and hands it back to the guy, and I do the same and hand it back. Then the guy takes the cups around to the next ranking guy and pours that, and those cups go around the whole room. So, everybody gets to drink out of a cup that the majesty drank out of.

Q: That's interesting.

General Howell: That was fascinating. That was a wonderful thing. Finally, he says, "Why don't we go eat?" So, I said, "thank you, sir." And so, we get up and we go into one of the buildings, one of the barracks they had. It looked like a conference room or a big hall, and they had these big tables in the middle of the room. No chairs or anything and they had these big platters, just heaped with mutton and fruits, and dates, and everything, all covered with yogurt poured over them. And so, what you would do, the little man with the pitcher comes up and washes your hands. He and I got to wash our hands first, he has a towel there. And then, you stand by the table and you just take this, it's all mixed with rice. It's all globbed together. You just grab a big plump [phonetic] of it then mash it in your right hand, and eat it out of your hand.

Q: Oh, you just eat it right out of your hand?

General Howell: Right out of your hand. You don't use your left hand, strictly right. I was told by my guy, "Don't ever use your left hand for anything over there!" And so, it's all right-handed, and we stood there and chatted. And then, some of my other officers chatted with him and, of course, he got around and chatted with some of his people. Then, he said, "Hey, I must leave." And so, he went out to the parade ground and had a helicopter out there waiting for him. He gets in it. He gets in the pilot's seat and off he goes.

Q: That sounds like a real culture awareness event; what impressed you with that area, the Arab world?

General Howell: I tell you, going to the different countries--treated very well and found it very interesting. And one thing, as an uneducated American, I had always sort of stereotyped the Arab culture that everybody's alike and everybody's the same, and thinks the same. I was completely wrong. Each one of those countries is a little different. They have their own attitude and they have their own perspective. They all have to sort of acknowledge Saudi Arabia as being the powerhouse because of all the oil and wealth they have but, they're not that fond of them. UAE is very advanced and very modern, want to be modern. Oman is an ancient [country]. You know, it's around the Horn [of Africa] there and part of it is in the Persian Gulf and the other part is in the Arabian Gulf. They used to be a great naval power of that region, for centuries, and there are still

communities that go all the way around the coastline of Pakistan and into India that used to be part of Omani Emirates, you know, and Shahs. And, there are actually still a Pakistani Brigade that still pledges loyalty and works for the Sultan of Oman. It's really amazing. They still have a very good Navy, modern Navy now. My Marines and I got to ride into the desert in Oman out to an outpost where they had a trading area there, and watched the people who come in on the weekends and trade, and all that.

Q: Did you have the opportunity to open the door or initiate relationships with some of the former Soviet Republics?

General Howell: Never got to Europe when I was MarForPac. That wasn't part of it. That was MarForLant [US Marine Corps Forces, Atlantic]. Our command went all the way from the Mississippi, heading west, all the way around the Pacific through the Persian Gulf to the Jordan River. So, Israel belong to the European Command, Central Command stopped in Jordan. And so, Egypt wasn't part of us either. That was all part of the European Command. And so, we didn't really deal with those folks.

Q: How about Australia, anything having to do with them?

General Howell: We went to a big conference in Australia, in Darwin for a week. And then, later on, a year later we had a big exercise down there. A combined-arms joint exercise with the Australians, and some other countries, and the Army-Navy-Air Force-Marines had two amphibious brigades down there that landed.

Q: That would be Operation Tandem Thrust?

General Howell: Tandem Thrust; that was a big deal. Went there for a week and observed, and participated. We had a lot of forces and also had F-18's down there. We had a couple of brigades there. Weather didn't cooperate; had a typhoon in the area at that time so it limited some of the stuff we could do, as far as landings [go]; brought a lot of Marines in there. Did a lot of live-fire operations. They've got some huge wonderful training areas there on the east coast of Australia and I got to see a lot of that. It was a great; I really enjoyed that.

Q: That's something that has really changed, training in Australia, used to that would never

happen, back in the days when you had VMFA-212 [early 1980s]. But now, it's a common occurrence.

General Howell: It is. We TransPac [trans Pacific] aircraft down there. A lot of them operated up north. You know, North Australia is very different from South Australia. Southern Australia, Sydney and that area, that's a lot like the California coast, the weather is beautiful and all that. You go up north and it's just hotter than Hades. You know, that's close to Indonesia, that's getting closer to the equator. And it's a whole different ball game, very rugged terrain and I mean everything there wants to kill you. I mean these poisonous snakes and spiders, and these saltwater crocodiles are huge and can jump out of the water and grab you. It is really something to see. I mean those people are tough. The Australians living up in North Australia and Darwin, they are tougher than nails.

Q: Where did the exercises and training occur?

General Howell: They have an air force base up there, Royal Australian Air Force [RAAF] base, where some of our F-18's deploy into and work a lot because there are a lot good ranges and what have you. They have a brigade up there, an Australian Army brigade, but the exercise and all that was down in the southern [part], close to Rockhampton, which is on the southern, east coast of Australia, about 100-200 miles north of Sydney. That area, it's close to the Great Barrier Reef and that area, beautiful country, just beautiful country. So, that was good.

Q: What was your impression of the Australians?

General Howell: The Australians really impressed me. They're more, they have a navy, but their army is the main force of Australia. They have an air force too. But, the Australian army is really sort of the mainstay of Australian armed forces and those guys are really pros. They have wonderful schools. They're highly trained. They impressed the hell out of me. Good guys, too. So, I really enjoyed that aspect. I got to visit in Indonesia for a week and was hosted. This is before the big overthrow, and we were really making inroads particularly since the volcano explosion in the Philippines and the closing of Subic [Bay Naval Base] and Clark [Air Force Base], we were trying to find other places where Marines could come and train. And Indonesia had great potential. We were courting them; CinCPac was courting them, for training areas and landing areas. So, as part of that, I went down and visited in Jakarta and then down on the southern tip.

You know, Indonesia is about 100 different islands there and that main island, I'm trying to think, they have a big naval base down in the southern part of that and that's where their main naval base is. I spent some time in Jakarta and visited all the heavies, but then their naval base, and where their marines are located, Indonesian marines, is down in that southern part. Went and visited with them and observed exercises. Got to hold big snakes and then eat snakes and watch some demonstrations that were just mind-boggling.

Q: What was your impression of the Indonesians?

General Howell: I mean, Indonesians are just tougher than nails; they really got some good marines. They're tough; parachuting out of the sky and running and shooting live ammunition in front of you at targets and then building pyramids with men and logs and doing exercises. I mean these guys--it was like going to the circus. These guys were good. That was a hoot, got to review the troops afterwards and all that. So, that was really interesting. My tour was a just a wonderful [experience]. It was non-stop and when it was all over, I was tired. After two and half years, and then actually more because I was an acting [commander] before I became the commander, you know it was time to leave. At the same time, I just enjoyed it. I felt very fortunate to have that opportunity.

Q: It is a unique command and the Marine Corps' biggest, I suppose it was changing and evolving to meet the world's changing situation.

General Howell: It was a unique command. We were still developing it. We were developing our presence. You know, we were developing the MarForPac presence and you know, CinCPac Fleet still, jealously, said, "Well, you know, your still FMFPac too; you still belong to me too." And [I said], "Yes." I never denied that. So, we would go to CinCPac meetings as both component commanders under CinCPac. When CinCPac Fleet would have an officer's call or a commander's meeting, I would go to that as FMFPac.

Q: Did you get any specific direction on how to handle this relationship?

General Howell: I don't think I got specific guidance from General Krulak but I think we both agreed that we don't want to rock the boat. We don't want to piss anybody off. We're not trying him. Let's do it all. I said, "Let's just play ball. Be on everybody's team and be there to serve

and make sure the Marines are represented and we're ready. You know, that we get to play when it is time to play."

Q: Did you notice a difference when General Zinni became CentCom as compared to General Peay?

General Howell: Yes, he was harder on us. I was quite shocked. Went to his first commander's meeting and he gave me crap about, you know, "You guys got to give me more than what you're giving. You're offering me these MEU's, and all they got is Harriers." And he said, "I don't want Harriers in here. Harriers can't do me any good."

Q: That's surprising—I guess?

General Howell: Yes, and when he was a MEF commander he was always offering his Harriers to these guys and he just totally did a 180 degree turn. I got pissed. I really felt like he was a turncoat. I felt like he was a salamander. He had changed his colors. But, he was just being CinCCent, and he was looking at it as CinC Cent. And maybe he felt like he wanted to show in front of his Army and Air Force and Navy brethren that he wasn't going to favor the Marines. But, he wasn't a very friendly commander to me or to MarForPac. And yet, we were players. We weren't pushed aside or stiff armed, but there wasn't a friendly thing there.

But then, socially when he would have socials he was always friendly, but officially he really leaned on us. And he just kept accusing us of not really being ready to support him like he thought he should be supported, with the forces he thought should be available. He said, "If you're really serious about having a force here, you should have forces deployed here all the time, operating in this area."

Q: You mean beyond MEUs?

General Howell: Oh yes, that was it. That was the point. He said, "The Army brings divisions over here and they exercise and the Air Force has all these squadrons in Saudi Arabia, that are ready to support me and they're here all the time." He said, "What are you Marines doing? You don't have anybody here." And we said, "Well we have the MEUs." Ah, he said, "The MEUs are nothing. They're a flea on an elephant's ass." And he said, "You're TacAir is zero." He said, "The Harriers, I don't want, leave the Harriers at home! And bring me more helicopters." He

wanted Marines deployed in the country and that's one reason, when they had that scare, I sent that advanced headquarters and we did send some units over there.

Q: Oh, you did? Where did they come out of?

General Howell: I don't remember exactly, but we did have some advanced units that went in.

Q: You're talking [about] a battalion or a regiment or something?

General Howell: Yes. They went into Kuwait and did some training there.

Q: Wasn't that a good thing though? Looking at what happened later on, with the war I mean. He [Zinni] has CentCom right up to the Iraq War. He turned it over to Tommy Franks.

General Howell: Yes. I had known Franks. He had been on Luck's staff, General Luck was the commander U.S. Forces Korea [USFK], Gary Luck and I really got on very well. He was always very genteel with me and always appreciated the Marine participation. Franks was his ops guy and we got to know each other there. When he had 2d Army or which army they had there at Fort McPherson in Georgia that supported Central Command. When Zinni had it, Franks took that command. And I actually paid an official call on him at his headquarters and he briefed me. So we got to be good friends. Tommy Franks is a very capable guy. I was really surprised that he went as far as he did because he was really rough around the edges. I mean he cussed like a sailor--in front of everybody! Being in his HQ, in a command brief, with civilians and men and women in there and just F-this and F-that and bullshit! I mean unbelievable! I was actually shocked. Then, when he became a four-star and got Central Command, I was very surprised! And he did a great job! He was very capable but the guy was profane. I tell you he was something else.

Q: He's from Texas isn't he?

General Howell: Yes. We got along very well. I'm very proud of him and how well he did.

Q: Which of the exercises, and there were 50 or so of them that MarForPac participated in every year, which ones did you consider most important?

General Howell: Well, the Cobra Gold took a lot of our exercises resources. I would put my deputy on it and we would bring in a General from either I MEF or III MEF to sort of run that and be the commander of Marine Forces for that exercise. Even though we took a lot of our people to help on that, we leaned on our MEF's, both I MEF and III MEF to provide most of the staff and the work for those exercises. Once more it was resources and all this other stuff we had to plan for. So, things we really focused with our battle staff on were the Central Command exercises and planning and the Korean exercises and planning, those were the ones that were the Ulchi Focus Lens, developing how we would flow forces through a contingency.

We made a big presence there and took our command post and most of my staff there to come in there and be a part of that. I did the same thing, anytime Central Command had a big exercise in Florida, we would go. And that's where they had them, they didn't really have any big CPX's over in the Persian Gulf. It was mostly going over there and visiting, paying calls and just showing our interest and what-have-you when I went to the Persian Gulf. I never went there as a part of an exercise or a deployment or anything like that.

Q: Were you able to attend any of the World War II commemoration ceremonies that were going on at this time?

General Howell: No I did not and I regretted that. I really was hoping, you know we had the big 50 year [ceremony] there in Hawaii and the President came and all that. We had an Ulchi Focus Lens going on simultaneously. So I was actually in Korea during most of that and got back the last day of that thing to see the big parade in Honolulu. But, that was one week of activities and was a big deal. My wife got to participate in a lot of that stuff, but I got in on the last day to see the big parade there and be with the CinC and all those people in the stands.

I'll tell you the FMFPac band was wonderful! That was a great band! You know, I had a wing band and they were great. But, I tell you the FMFPac band was one of the finest Marine and military bands coming or going. Those guys, they were sharp and they played great music. I was really proud of them. They made good music and they really enhanced morale. And we would always have a Friday morning formation and that was the only time we had a staff formal formation in front of the headquarters every Friday morning. The band would always be there and serenade the formation. Of course, it got to be my habit to always say, when I'd start any of these formations, "It's great to be alive and in the Corps!" That was the first thing I always said. And the band picked-up on that and every time I'd say that they'd all come out with a big cheer, "Whoop whoop whoop whoop!" [celebratory cheer]. So, even at my change of command when

they were out in the formation and everything where you had all those Marines out there and first thing I said, when I stood up to give my farewell speech was, “It’s great to be alive and in the Corps!” The band came out with a big cheer.

They also had a big Christmas program they would put on over at Kaneohe and they invited me to participate and to recite the *Night Before Christmas* with accompanying of the band. You know, where you would say a few verses and they would play and then say a few verses and they would play. And so, I came in my dress blues and they had a Santa Claus hat with three-stars on it that they gave me. So, I put that on. I brought all the kids in the audience up around and I was in this big easy chair and I would recite the *Night Before Christmas* and the band would accompany me. We did that two years and that was fun. That was a hoot. So, that was just one of those really neat and fun things that you get to do as a commander.

Q: Do you want to talk about logistics, MPS [maritime pre-positioned shipping] you had a couple of exercises there-- Native Fury that turns out to be very significant.

General Howell: It was significant, it was very important. Every time an MPS ship would come by Hawaii on their rotations I always asked, I always wanted to know when they are coming. I want to go say hello. Sometimes they wouldn’t even come into the port, they’d be offshore and I’d get out there and visit with them and see how they were doing because they were so important. That was the thing; you see that was a big selling point I could make to the CinC’s. I would go tell them, “We can fall in. We can have a MEF in there and have them ready for combat in a much shorter time than the Army can because of this capability.” And I tried to get them to get on those ships and see what was on them and they just couldn’t believe it until they went on board one, and knowing that they’d have, in one squadron we had three of them and in the other we had four ships with all this, a MEF’s worth of, I think it was a MEF or was it a MEB? I’m trying to think. It was a Marine expeditionary brigade with 30 days worth of fighting.

Q: On each squadron?

General Howell: Yes, in each squadron and we could bring two squadrons into Korea or into the Persian Gulf. We exercised that and we worked it hard. We would have an off-load. We did a MEF, an MPF off load in that Australian exercise. We brought one in and offloaded it. Brought just one ship, didn’t offload the whole thing, but I mean you start bringing all that gear off and people say, “My God look at all that stuff [surprised inflection].” It’s all rolling and it’s all

working, take some of those 155 [howitzers] out and shoot them and that gets people's attention [and] tanks. So that was very impressive. You're bringing in the Marines, either flying them in or bringing them in on ships, and they just get on top of that gear and go.

I was very pleased because the people who did that work did it very well and the planning was excellent. We exercised that stuff and it was good. We did one in Hawaii as I recall. We did one in Australia and I think we did one in Okinawa while I was there.

Q: How often did they have those?

General Howell: I think we did one on the West coast it seemed like every year too. So, that was a big deal. It was very expensive, very time consuming, and very worthwhile. You've got to do it. You've got to work it. You know those people are going to keep that stuff up if they know you're going to come and pull that stuff off.

Q: Did you get a chance to check out the pre-positioned stocks up in Norway?

General Howell: That really made an impression on me when I was in Europe with Allied Forces Northern Command, our MPF gear in that mountain was pristine and operable. But, I went down to--and they had another name for theirs, where all these tanks and artillery that the Army had in Europe there, that they were going to bring forces over to fall on when the Russians came running-- I went and visited a couple of those sites and a lot of that gear was not operable. And they admitted it. That they had money crunching and personnel crunching and they were not able to maintain a lot that stuff like their battle plan said they were, and like the Russians thought we were. They Army had a lot of stuff that would not start up and go. But the Marines, our stuff was ready! That was a source of great pride to me. It was very important.

Q: Did you see a conflict, or a potential conflict, in how logistics would be worked if we went to war in regards to MarForPac? You supply the warfighter, but then again the warfighter takes a logistics organization with them: an FSSG. So was there going to be some problems, an interface or lack of, there between your organization and the MEF's?

General Howell: No. They were the focal point and they got the priority of how they wanted to do it, and I was there to support them and make them succeed. I'd been in squadrons where the group [Marine aircraft group] got in our way and interfered with what we were trying to do -- so as a

group commander I said, "We're not going to do that." I'd been a group commander when FMFPac and others, would pull us away from combat training to do silly stuff and so I told the people when I was a wing commander, "We're not going to do that unless we are made to do that!" And there were exercises and things we did where I'd have to apologize to my group commanders and say, "You've got to do this. You've got to support this and here is why." And so, at least make them understand instead of shoving it down their throats. But as a rule, "Let them call the shots on what they need to do to be ready for combat and let's help them at that." And so, when I got to be the MarFor commander I told my staff, "You can get this power feeling like you can jerk these MEF's around and start telling them what to do, we're not going to do that. Let's hear what they want to do, let's help them effect that, and support them, and it goes the same with logistics." It was interesting-- I told you I went to Darwin, Australia for a week and it was a commander's briefing where basically major commanders from all over the southern hemisphere came there for a conference. We were all given a chance to speak. They were talking about "We can war fight this and we're planning this and we can maneuver." You know you had New Zealand there, Australian commanders, people from Indonesia and Malaysia and those countries -- and I stood up in front of them, I said, "I have a force of 80,000 Marines that reach across half the world, but I just want to let all of you know my function is as a logistics officer. I am a logistics officer. I've learned that as a commander. It would be very easy to say that I've got these forces and I can maneuver them down there." I said, "That's not my job. My job is to provide the fighters with the wherewithal so they can do that." And that's why I tried to emphasize that with my staff over and over again, "Let's be very careful that we don't get in their way. Let's help them do what they want to do. Of course, when the CinC's want something we have to react. Well, they know that. But, we're going to help them support the CinC's and fight for the CinC's." That was our main purpose. And try to stiff arm people who might interfere with them from other services or the CinC's themselves, like on TacAir. TacAir was always a fight. There were people who wanted to have the overall logistics control of logistics, and that's a big deal. There were people who wanted to take our MPF away from us and use it for other things. You had to make sure that they understood that, "That belongs to the Marines and that's going to go with the Marine maneuver units. That's part of a MEF and their logistics planning for warfare. That's not going to come in there and be a logistics base or an ammo dump for the rest of the warfighters around there." That was my job, to hold those people off and make sure we could hold our forces together to fight. And let me just put in a plug for the Navy. The Navy was very supportive, not just with the MPF, with other logistics. We had to do a lot of planning with the Navy for the logistics train that would keep people supplied and all that. And that was tough! You know they had a big job. They had the carriers and the carrier battle

groups pull a lot of support from oilers and logistics and all that. So, that was a battle to make sure that we got the Navy, merchant marine; the beauty of having MPF was that you had a ready force that belonged to us that could fall in and bring all that stuff immediately and at least give you 30 days so that the Navy could generate a merchant marine force to support you long range. And the big crunch: “Are they going to be able to get 30 days now and then get re-supplied?” That was always the question. I’m not sure if it was ever answered frankly.

But, at least MPF gave you that edge where you knew that you would have at least 30 days worth of warfighting. That would be interesting to study what happened in Iraq, in this last war, how the logistics panned out. I know they ran out of stuff; you always do! Water, food, ammo! But they did a hell of a job!

Q: Anything else on MarForPac?

General Howell: One of the neat things about being MarForPac, I think interesting, President Clinton was trying to sort of break down some bridges between us and people who had been former enemies like Russia-USSR, as well as, in the east, China. They were trying to make some inroads to try to settle some differences and get a better a relationship working with both the new Russian people and the Chinese. Admiral Prueher was really into that. He thought that that was a great idea. So, with the President’s blessing, first, we had a big entourage of senior Russian Generals who came to visit for a week at CinCPac. But, all of the component commanders, CinCPac Fleet, U.S. Air Force Pacific, U.S. Army Pacific, Coast Guard HQ there, and Marine Forces Pacific. We all participated. We would take turns with these officers bringing one or two of them to our headquarters, give them a command brief and then I would always get them over to Kaneohe and we would have a static display set-up. The MSSG [Marine service support group] over there would set-up all kinds of neat things over there like water-making machines and other stuff that we would show them. That was a neat week with the Russians. I had one Russian general who was the stereotype: burly, he looked like a little bear, with a red face and he had that big hat, you know. He comes into my office and I offer for him to sit down. Of course, just with the translator, he couldn’t speak any English and I couldn’t speak any Russian. He immediately, he’s not pounding the table, but he sort of pointed his finger at me across my conference table that, he said, “This has been a good visit, but [thick Russian accent] I couldn’t wait to visit with you, the Marine commander, because I just wanted you to know that for the last ten years I was in charge, when we were Soviet Union I was in charge of the defense of Vladivostok against, Marine invasion of Vladivostok, and I had defense in depth and we had heavy artillery and we had air. When you

would come there and invade us I was going to drive you back into the ocean and kill everyone of you! I had the defense to do that!” [thick Russian accent] He said that! He said, “I would have killed you and all of your Marines!”

I admit, I was quite surprised, I said, “It would be a bloody battle. It would have been a bloody battle.” That’s all I said. That was my only response. In my mind I was thinking, “You dumb shit! You think we would try to have an amphibious invasion of Vladivostok?! That’s the last damn thing we would ever think about! I would never DREAM of doing that!” [shocked and laughing tone] But, that was really amazing; I mean they were ready to fight us! That was an interesting thing. But, those guys, an offshoot of that, we found out the last night they were there they had a big social for them and General Ord, who had the U.S. Army Pacific, was at Camp Shafter--they looked liked the old movies of the Second World War, these big old beautiful frame homes and palm trees – had a big social there, beautiful place. And these Russians had, we found out that when they first came there and saw Hawaii and saw all the beautiful things and the modern [stuff], all the cars, they thought that it was a movie set. They thought that it was made up, that we had built all this just to impress them and that it really wasn’t real life.

Q: Just like they would do if we were to visit them.

General Howell: Yes. Finally after a week, and us just letting them go out and go shopping and go anywhere, they realized that this is the way it really is in the United States. And those guys didn’t want to go back. They were crying. Some of them actually cried that night because they hated for the visit to end. They just didn’t want to go. That was interesting. Another visit we hosted, it was the first time I think in a long time – if not forever – that we had a big contingency of People’s Republic of China, officers and the chief-of-staff of the Red Chinese army. Well, I found out later on that they got about four or five chiefs-of-staff. But, one of them had a big entourage of three and four-stars, [they] came to Hawaii for a command visit. And Admiral Prueher hosted them again and they would be farmed out to us and I’ll never forget, I had a, I think General Jung was his name. It was either Jung or Chung, something like that, who was a big man. He was bigger than-- he was at least as big as me. You know with Chinese you don’t picture that. And he was an older fellow. He was, unlike the Russians or the Japanese or the Koreans who are just so uptight you know they are just saving face and very concerned about that, the Chinese were relaxed. They were very comfortable with themselves and with other people. I just felt a rapport. And he came to my headquarters and we gave him a command brief through a translator and all that. And then same thing, took him over to Kaneohe in a helicopter and I had him for the whole day. I gave him

a static display brief, took him up to Pyramid Rock there, a big rock formation with a tower that used to be a seaplane-base tower.

Janel: Kansas Tower.

General Howell: Yes, Kansas Tower. Pyramid Rock was out on the end of the island, but you remember Kansas Tower, that big rock formation that had the building up on top of her, right in the middle of Kaneohe? That you could see everything? It was Kansas Tower because the Navy sailor, who was in that tower when the Japanese attacked, that got killed was from Kansas. So, they named it Kansas Tower. Pyramid Rock is where President Clinton stayed in that VIP quarters there.

Q: Did you get to meet him?

General Howell: Yes. I'll tell you about that, too. But, don't let me forget. Anyway I had General Jung. We went up, drove up, winding up that road up to Kansas Tower and we're up there just walking. You know, they had a platform that went all the way around it. And with a translator I'm just pointing out points of interest, and of course, you can see the Pali, the cliffs of the Pali, it looks like the legend of the gods lining their boats up there on the cliffs. And it's just beautiful. I'm explaining all of that and we get around to looking at the ocean side and I'm saying: "There's the runway and this is wing-side over here, and then over there is the ground-side where the regiment is, and then that's our Officers' Club, that's where our officers' quarters are, and then there's the golf course there." And he said, "Wong Wi Whaa [phonetic]," through his translator. And the translator said, "Oh, the General wants to know do you play golf?" And it just came to me, I guess at the time, for whatever reason, I said, "No, tell the General I don't play golf. Tell him I play WHACK SHIT!" And the translator said, "Whackah Shittt [phonetic, Chinese accent]?" I said, "Yeah, tell the General that I whack at the ball and then I say, 'Shit!'" And I said, "Tell him that that's the way I play golf." And he said, "Whooaa Hung Me Mao Wee Oww Whackah Shittt An My Meow Me Oi [phonetic, Chinese impersonation]." And the General went, "Ho Ho Ho [hearty laughter]," I mean he just had this big loud laugh. And he said, "Whackah Shittt...Ho Ho Ho!" He just really thought it was funny. So, I thought I had made a great joke. And so, we end up the visit. Well, that night they had the whole Chinese entourage, Prueher hosted them, for a big reception at one of the hotels downtown. It was very nice. We were all dressed up in our formal uniforms with our wives and everybody was all decked out. They bring the Chinese there and

they're having sort of a waiting line, introducing the wives and all that. So, as they're approaching Janel and me, General Jung is there with Admiral Prueher, and he points up ahead at me and he says, "Ohhh Whackah Shittt!!! Whackah Shittt [phonetic, Chinese accent]!!!" [Laughing]. [Admiral] Prueher looks at him and looks at me [laughing] and he said, "Beak! What the hell have you been telling this guy?" That was really funny. I had to explain that.

Q: You had mentioned the meeting with President Clinton?

General Howell: Yes, President Clinton came through there a couple of times. The second time he came through was right after his second election victory. They were on their way, I think to Australia, but they stopped in Hawaii for a visit for like three or four days. The first time they had been there we had actually hosted them out at Pyramid Rock in those VIP quarters and they stayed there. This time they were going to stay at the Air Force, at Bellows Air Force Base. They have a wonderful VIP quarters there, and that's where they were going to be at that time. That's also on the windward side not far from Kaneohe. But, they were coming into Hickam [AFB]; and they were going to be landing there that night at around eight or nine o'clock in the evening. Janel and I were also attending a big change of command, for one of the Navy commands there, it was either one of the fleet commanders or a submarine base commander, somebody, and they were having a big change of command in the old Pearl Harbor Officers' Club, which wasn't an Officers' Club anymore, it was sort of a big community meeting room and what-have-you. We had been at this thing, and traditionally you take flower leis to a change of command and you've have a lei for the wife of the one leaving and then a lei for the commander and then one for the other two, too. We were sitting there, in this change of command, with these leis on our arm and the change of command went on and on and on and on and speaker after speaker, which was a typical Navy change of command. It was where it just got to be awful. The problem was, watching the time and the President was coming into Hickam. We had to be there to greet him. And so, we had to actually politely leave without giving away our leis. So, we ended up over at Hickam, and it's a little misty, it's raining a little bit. Of course, secret service checks everybody out and we're there, the Governor of Hawaii is there, the Mayor of Honolulu, Admiral Prueher is there with his wife, and then some of the senior Air Force. As I recall, the Air Force and Army commanders were off island. So, I ended up being about third or fourth in line with my wife, of the people of the reception committee. And we still had the leis and so we said, "Well, let's just give the leis to the President and his wife." So, Janelle had a lei for the President and I had one for his wife. And so, they come through. They get off the airplane and it's sort of misty. But, they meet the Governor

and the other heavies, and he comes up to me and I get set to shake hands, greet the President. I just said, "On behalf of the Pacific Marines I want to welcome you back to Hawaii. It's great to have you back; congratulations on your election!" He said, "Well, thank you very much." He's a very charming guy. He really gets eye contact and makes you feel great. I can see why he has been such a successful politician. And so, the next person is Mrs. Clinton, and we shake hands and I give her the same greeting and then I also, I told her, I said, "May I lei you?" But, then I showed her the flowers. But, I said, "May I lei you?" I just couldn't resist. And she sort of, that statement sort of took her aback and then she saw the flowers and then she said, "Well, I think that's a great idea." That was her answer. So, I put the lei on and gave her a kiss. And so, I actually embraced the President's wife, Mrs. Clinton.

Q: Maybe the future President.

General Howell: Yes, and she was very charming too. I'd never been a big fan of hers personally, but I can see why she is so successful because she really gives you all of her attention and smiles. Those people really know how to work the room. They know how to grab people. And so there's a lot of charisma there with both of them. I was not expecting that from her, I was from him. But, that was my only experience with them.

Q: Talking about China, what was the status with Taiwan?

General Howell: Taiwan is always simmering. We cannot officially acknowledge them and cannot have them officially visit us on command visits or anything. But, we did meet with them from time to time informally, with the CinC and the commanders. We would actually have to take our uniforms off and go and put on civilian clothes then go meet at an O [Officers'] Club with Taiwanese military officials and discuss matters. We never made any deals or anything. But, they would tell us what was on their mind and what they were hoping for, and we would tell them what was going on and what we might do to help them. But, we always had to tell them, "We cannot officially give you any aid or anything like that. We understand your problem. You know that the United States is your friend and we have stated that you should remain separate. Even though you are a part of China, we'll support your independence anyway we can. But..." Those meetings, we met with them once a year, and talked to them.

Q: They came to Hawaii; no uniforms?

General Howell: Yes, everybody wore aloha gear. Then they would go on to the continental United States and go try to meet the President. That's when the President would always get in the hot-seat with China, meeting with the Taiwanese President and that kind of stuff. Now we really wouldn't get the President of Taiwan, but this would be an entourage of their senior military leaders.

Q: They have a Marine Corps don't they?

General Howell: They do. They've got an excellent Marine Corps! And I actually, as a second lieutenant, in one of our Taiwan operations, we actually worked and maneuvered with them when I was a second lieutenant when we were on Taiwan. Just another story, this is not part of my command, but right after I retired from the Marine Corps I was invited by the Chief of Naval Operations of the Taiwan Navy to come visit Taiwan on their dime just to come with my wife as a visitor for a tour. So, I checked with the Marine Corps and with the Embassy and they said, "That's very typical. They like to make friends with former senior U.S. military people to keep a connection in case later on you might be able to help." He said, "That's typical. Go ahead and have a good time." So, we actually went over there on a Chinese airline and landed and spent a week with them. Was hosted, my direct host, was the Commandant of the Taiwanese Marine Corps and we had an escort officer who took us all over Taiwan. We visited military bases and watched exercises, went to parks and recreations and museums. And we had a great time! We spent a week with them and then came back. That was really a great experience.

The museum they have with these old Chinese artifacts that Chiang Kai-Shek, I guess is his name, brought with him when he came over. Some of the stuff is one thousand years old, some of that stuff, the carved ivory and what-have-you. It's incredible stuff.

Q: When you were talking about the Navy supporting you, the MPS, what about the Air Force? The Marine Corps relies on the Air Force when we deploy too, for an emergency situation, especially in CentCom. How supportive were they in your contingency planning?

General Howell: The Air Force is very professional. They know chapter and verse exactly what is required of them, what they've agreed to, and they come through on that. For extra exercises, for transport, it costs you an arm and a leg to carry you on an Air Force MAC [Military Airlift Command] transport. It was a lot cheaper to charter an airliner to go someplace with Marines than

it was to get the Air Force to take you. And we did that a lot and got a lot of heat from the Air Force that they were supposed to do that, but I mean it was like triple the fee to ride on a 141 [C-141 Starlifter] than it was to ride on a 707 [Boeing 707]. The Air Force would just rip you off. We complained about that continuously and a lot of times we would get a lot of excess flights that were deadheading places, if we could work that out, we would use Air Force assets to take people here and there because then they wouldn't charge you so much if it was a deadhead coming from something else that had paid them already. And we had some really aggressive sharp people with initiative in our operations and planning groups that used to work that all the time and in our logistics, to working the problem of getting MEF people from Okinawa to other places, and from California to places, getting our people places. It was a continuous battle. The Air Force was more than happy to support if you had the money, but they were having airplane problems too. So, it was not unusual to have a 141 or a C-5 committed then getting you halfway to where you were going and have a problem and then land some place. And then have Marines stuck some place for three or four days waiting for transportation to take them on to where they were going. The Air Force was really, that's when they were getting those hairline cracks in their C-5's. The 141's had just been beat up in the Gulf War, and so they were really hurting. They were trying their best. They were doing all they could to live up to their commitments, but they didn't have any depth. They were having a hard time.

Q: It's a good thing they got that C-17. That's a great airplane.

General Howell: Yes, very expensive airplane. It carries one tank.

Q: But it's expeditionary.

General Howell: It is.

Q: Do you have any comments on the Navy and amphibious shipping? Always a big issue.

General Howell: It was always an issue and the amphib people were wonderful. The "gator" Navy has really come around since I was a second lieutenant and those guys are dedicated to supporting the Marines. The problem is that you just don't have enough of them. The Navy doesn't build enough of them. They give priority to other stuff so it was just always a struggle to have the necessary amphibious shipping just to take care of the normal deployments. And of course, the

Marines suffer for that because the Navy can only move their ships at a certain time. They have to get them off one thing and onto another. And so, their schedule of their ships drove a lot of the deployment schedules of our Marines, which really made it tough on families and Marines to have to go early, a month early because that's the only shipping they could get or come home a month late because that's the only time the ship was available, that kind of stuff. That's all a matter of them not having enough ships. It wasn't the guys who were sailing the ships and operating them; they were doing the best that they could, but it really put a crunch on us trying to move people and stay on schedule and get people here and back when you don't have enough ships. It always is a real struggle. And then, of course, for contingencies you're always concerned about not having the shipping you need to move people and stuff to where you've got to go to war. And there are a lot of promises made, a lot of the merchant shipping. Of course, the airlines had their emergency fleet that was ready to support contingencies and move people, the airlines were committed to that. But, there was always a big question mark: "Is that really going to work when we need them?" And I don't know, but it would appear in the Iraqi war that all that happened, all of that worked. But, I don't know. While I was there it was a great concern, a great concern. But, the people themselves, who were involved, were doing everything they could. We just didn't have the ships we needed.

Q: Just like everything else, not enough depth.

General Howell: Yes, and we were always battling our own Marines, you know the Atlantic Marines versus the Pacific Marines on who gets priority for shipping and that stuff. That was always a constant battle.

Q: Headquarters [Marine Corps] got involved in that I suppose?

General Howell: Yes, and of course, they were right there on the east coast, so they had a lot of sympathy and a lot of help. So, anyway we always thought we got short shrift, but we got things done. We made it okay. It wasn't easy. One thing I think that went well was that my wing commander, at that time, [Paul A.] Fratarangelo, the 3d [Marine Aircraft] Wing. First [Marine Aircraft] Wing was Krupp, Denny Krupp. I had several. It seemed like I had one per year. I can't keep up with who all was out there. I need to look in a book.

Q: Did [Earl] Hailston, ever have one?

General Howell: Yes, Hailston had it for a while and of course, he ended up with III MEF as I recall.

Q: He ended up as MarForPac.

General Howell: Yes, and later on was MarForPac. Not after me. Carl Fulford took it from me. He had had I MEF and came out to take MarForPac. And then, after him was [Frank] Libutti. Libutti had it after him and then I think that's when Hailston came in after Libutti.

But, our wing commanders sat down together and worked out helping each other on UDP's [unit deployment programs], which I was very proud of, between Lant and Pac. And we resolved some real tough issues on both F-18's and Harriers, on trying to cover for each other, to make it easier and take a load off some of the units on coming and going from WestPac.

Q: They decided to put your old squadron, VMFA-212 out in Iwakuni and leave it there.

General Howell: That was either right before I became MarForPac or right when I did because they moved out there at that time. And that picture on the wall, right by you, is a shot of me visiting 212 when I was MarForPac and they gave me that picture.

Q: I've heard through the rumor mill that they're disillusion because they're not getting to participate in the war and this and that. They feel like they are the second team.

General Howell: That doesn't surprise me at all. Of course, at that time it was new and those guys were getting to go to Australia every year so they were having a good time. And that was before any Iraqi war, but there's always that notion of being out of the game. If they can deploy and go to the Philippines and go places and fly then you won't hear them complaining. But, if they're stuck on Iwakuni, there's just no place to train in Iwakuni; that's the worst place you can have a tactical squadron if it's stuck there.

Q: Okay, do you recall the meeting in September of 1996, when you met with I MEF and III MEF commanders and the 1st and 3d MAW [Marine Aircraft Wing], where you got together with those guys?

General Howell: Yes, we did that more than once. Actually, anytime we had an opportunity where

most of us were in one place I'd have to call a meeting and when we went to Korea, Ulchi Focus Lens, most of my Generals were there. And so, we would have a session there. But, I decided, just like the Commandant, that I would have all the General officers come. A lot of the initiatives we were taking were for family readiness and unit deployment, how to deal with that. So, I actually had an Officer's Call with their wives in Hawaii two times, once each year. I brought in the MEF commanders and all of their commanding Generals, and their wives, and their sergeant majors, and had a big conference up there in Hawaii to discuss issues to sort of let everybody know what was going on, what the plans were, get everybody together, and then come up and discuss certain issues that people had and try to iron them out together and help each other out with them. They were quite successful and well received and I think the guys enjoyed themselves, but it was good to get everybody together. Too often the I MEF guys never really get to talk to the III MEF guys, except with messages, and that way I could get them all together and let their wives talk to each other and I found it to be a very fruitful experience.

Q: I thought that it was interesting that you had the 1st and 3d MAW there too. But, the record doesn't show the divisions.

General Howell: They were there. They were all there. I'm surprised. No, it was all of my commanding generals and their wives, and their command sergeant majors [phonetic]. So, it was the divisions, the FSSG of the MEF, and the base commanders, the base commanding generals.

Q: That was another hat you had to wear, Commander of Bases West.

General Howell: It was funny; initially [Camp] Pendleton wasn't a part of that, you see initially. They belong to Headquarters [Marine Corps]. We decided, the Commandant, General Krulak, said, "Hey, that's silly. Let's put all of the bases that support MarForPac should be under MarForPac." There was incredible resistance to that from base commanders, but we became their commander. And it wasn't a year later that General [Claude C.] Reinke came to me and said, "This is the best thing that's ever happened to us because we were always having to duke it out with Headquarters over funding and everything. Now, we've got a three-star going and representing us as part of that and it really helps." So, I had to support my base commanders, too. That was another aspect of my job; going around and visiting with them and checking on their status. I spent a lot time traveling and visiting, and "gripping and grinning." So, that was part of my function. Of course, my deputy did that for me a lot of the times too.

Q: You were talking about family readiness. That's a characteristic of your career-- you seem to see the importance of family readiness. What are your thoughts and perspective on that? Can you encapsulate the significance of family readiness, and also maybe what you did at MarForPac?

General Howell: I saw the evolution. You know, when I became an officer in the Marine Corps, Marines below sergeant were still having to ask their commanding officer if they could get married. Then that was taken to court very early on in the 1960's and shot down where they couldn't do that anymore. I don't really have the accurate statistics, but a majority of young Marines, both officer and enlisted in the Marine Corps were bachelors when I came in the Marine Corps. Only older Marines, both enlisted and officers, were married with families initially. And the old thing that, "If the Marine Corps wanted you to have a wife they'd issue you one." That was very common. That sounds very macho, but really in a lot of ways the Marine Corps was a bachelor organization. A majority of Marines were not married. And it wasn't until really the all volunteer force that all of the sudden we started getting young Marines in, who came in married or married very quickly. And a lot of Marines married each other and I think that was out of convenience to get out of the barracks or whatever. And so, we found ourselves, when we got into unit deployment in the 1970's is when this transition [occurred], it had been happening and we just really didn't recognize this, all of the sudden we had a big slug of young Marines with families, which was something that we had never had in my earlier life in the Marine Corps, and that the Marine Corps had never experienced, that by the mid-1970's this was a reality and it didn't really affect us that much until we started unit deployment. Throughout Vietnam--you know we had started this trans-placement, before Vietnam, went away very quickly because during Vietnam units were in country and they had individual orders of people going in as replacements. And you knew when you got to Vietnam that you were going to be there 13 months and everybody who was there was going to leave ahead of you, unless you got shot, and then everybody who came in behind you was going to leave after you did and that's the way it was. That was in all units: ground, air, everything.

So, if you were married, the Marine Corps gave you PCS [permanent change of station] orders and the wherewithal to send your wife home to momma or to a place where she had support, and it was up to you to do that and most people took advantage of that. And so, your wife would go close to friends or relatives so they would have that support. So, the Marine Corps didn't have to worry about it.

Q: They were off base. They were kicked off base is another way to look at it, which sounds pretty bad.

General Howell: That was it. Quite frankly, most Marines didn't live on base anyways, even when they were in ConUS. We never had enough base housing for our Marines, because we never had thought about it much. And so, people lived off base anyway. But, you just didn't think about it much. The only time you got a problem is when the husband was away from the wife, but if he's going individual orders then he can send her someplace else; so the Marine Corps didn't have be concerned. UDP came along in the mid-1970's. It started around 1975 or 1976, and now, all-of-a-sudden, you've got units moving out, leaving their wives in place a long way from home. And all-of-a-sudden we have this realization that we have young Marines with very young wives, some of them who don't even have driver's licenses, who are pregnant; don't have a high school education; don't even know where the bank is, the husband took care of all that and didn't even let them know how much money they were making, because they didn't want them to know; and now they're leaving them and these wives--it was just a catastrophe! And we had so many problems with wives abandoned and with all kinds of problems with children, wives becoming prostitutes, it was just a mess! We didn't prepare ourselves or our families, and so that's why we realized we needed to do that. And so, while I was a part of that as the executive officer and the CO of a squadron that was in UDP; we realized and we took that on, on ourselves to help resolve that problem. We started looking to other people and seeing how they were doing it. We took ideas from other people, the Key Volunteers came out of that and that had come out of ideas we found out on the East coast, that General [Keith A.] Smith and 2d MAW had started a program like this that for some time had really worked. We found out later on, that the Army had some family support programs; that we copied from them. To me as a squadron commander I found out right away that if I was deployed someplace with my squadron and there were family problems back home I had Marines who were not thinking about doing their job. They were not being able to concentrate on what they were doing. That became very dangerous and that affected combat capability. Also, some of them, I had to send home to take care of some problems and that hurt combat capability. So really, family readiness is a combat capability issue. So, the Marine Corps, if we're a combat outfit, we'd better have ready families too. So, it's not just a nice thing to do, it's a necessary thing to do for combat. So, we got real serious about it and developed these programs and tried our best to do it in some commands without the wives help. We thought we knew how to do it because we're Marines and realized that the source of understanding what the problems is and how to fix it were with the wives themselves. They were the ones that were left at home to take care of this stuff. So, I was

lucky enough to listen to my wife and have her help me, and have other wives get together to come up with ideas of how we can better support families. And so, we developed these different organizations: the LINKS [lifestyle insights, networking, knowledge, skills] and Key Volunteers and all of that. We let the wives help us organize those things. So, by the time I became a wing commander we really worked hard at that. I was lucky enough to take command of a wing that had had a strong program of that already, but we enhanced it. And then, when I got out to MarForPac, I really was in a position as a commander to really influence this, making sure that we had support for family readiness. We started pressing Headquarters [Marine Corps] to come up with an overarching Marine Corps policy in that regard, too. We had a Commandant who understood, General Krulak, [he] understood that and really wanted to make that happen and [had] the strong support of his wife. So, it became an official move, by the Marine Corps, to develop and enhance Marine Corps family readiness throughout the Marine Corps. There was a lot of resistance, a lot of resistance. There were a lot of Marine senior officers who said, "This is BS. This is not necessary. I can take care of this myself. I don't need the Marine Corps telling me how to do that." So, there was a lot of resistance from different people. For some reason, the air wing people seemed to embrace it a lot quicker than the ground guys. I'm not going to try and theorize why that it is, but it was just a matter of fact. But, because of the Commandant's influence and a realization, by the people who had been through this, it developed and improved. I'm very pleased.

Q: You mentioned Army programs as being good, how did the Marine Corps' stack up to other services'?

General Howell: When I was MarForPac we looked at the Army programs and the Army really had very good family support programs. The Navy was really hurting, but they were very aggressive in trying to catch up. By the time I left the Marine Corps I was very pleased, in my assessment, that the Marine Corps had one of the best family readiness programs in the military, and was getting better all of the time. So, I think that's something the Marine Corps should look on with great pride, and to this day, I haven't studied, but I think the Marine Corps has continued to develop a very good family readiness program. And that's one reason why the Marine Corps is so combat ready; it's because we have such a good family readiness program.

Q: Back on MarForPac, looking at the way the war is going now, the big emphasis is on cultural awareness, understanding the culture before you commit forces. Was any of that on the skyline there at MarForPac?

General Howell: Yes, it was. I had officers who had worked in those theatres, either with legations or with embassies, who were convinced that that was going to be an issue and a problem and that we needed more training of our people. Anytime we deployed Marines anywhere we had booklets trying to teach them about the culture and all of that. But, it was always a last minute thing, “Oh by the way, read this book, now you know how the culture is.” And so, we were ill-prepared as an organization. I was lucky enough to have an operations officer who really was serious about that stuff and knew that stuff. So, whenever I traveled there he was with me and he coached me, and thank God he did. I made enough blunders with him coaching me. If he hadn’t been there I might have created some national scandals, I don’t know. But, that is really necessary. It is an important thing. He was an outstanding guy.

Q: Well, there are so many. Do you have any final comments on MarForPac?

General Howell: I’ve got a couple of notes here of sort of interesting thing; a couple of incidents that are of interest. Right toward the end of my command in the spring of 1998, before I was going to retire, I got a call from the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Krulak, saying, “Beak, you know the different service chiefs are obligated to go around to the land grant colleges and help commission their ROTC Officers that are coming in.” He said, “I’ve been invited to go to Texas A&M University to be their commissioning officer.” And he said, “I can’t do it, would you do this for me, because you’re from Texas?” And I told him, I said, “Commandant, do you understand what you are doing here? Because I went to THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS and I don’t know if A&M would really appreciate me coming there.” And he said, “AHH Yeah, Yeah Yeah! [Gruff intonation]. Ted Hopgood, who had retired the year before who was a Marine two-star and I don’t know if you knew him, General [Marvin T.] Hopgood, a real fine guy, he said, “He’s the senior Marine there and he’s got the Corps of Cadets. He’ll be there to take real good care of you.” So, I ended up going to A&M.

Q: That must have been daunting.

General Howell: They were very nice to me. But, it was really an interesting experience. On the day of the commissioning exercise, they had all services of the officers being commissioned, they had a couple of dozen of them, because A&M is a big school and has a very strong ROTC. And then, but they had the whole Corps of Cadets there, about 3,000 strong, the Fightin’ Aggie Band

was there, and then all of the parents on the side. It was in a big field house and I'm up on the stage with the whole Board of Regents, because this was graduation week and there were all kinds of graduation ceremonies going on all week. And then, the president of the university was there, and then Ted Hopgood and I are up there in our dress blues. And so, the president of the university gets up and welcomes everybody there and says, "You know, because we have the Corps here and all of the family we ought to start this out with a yell practice." And so, wouldn't you know it, but all the Aggie Cheerleaders, or Yell Leaders, I guess I'm insulting them by calling them cheerleader – in their white smocks come up on the stage and man they go through all their, "Screw [phonetic] Texas, Fight Rah!!!" You know, how they have all their own special little cheers and they all have something to do with "To Hell with Texas University!" and "Screw the Longhorns!" And everybody stands up and all the Aggies take the crouch, their little posture they do when their doing their cheers, and I'm standing there just standing there listening to this crap. And so, they do that and finally Ted Hopgood comes up to introduce me and says, "As you know our guest speaker is a renowned commander of Marine Forces Pacific and you probably know he attended that school up the river up there." And there's this "RRRRRRRRRRRR [phonetic roar]!" I mean murmur in the crowd. I mean literally people are "RRRRRRRRRR [phonetic growling]!" you know, no booing, but just they don't like it. But, Ted Hopgood, he said, "Well, you've got to understand that you'll learn when you get to be an old Aggie like me that every Aggie needs to have a friend from the University of Texas. You will have a good friend from the University of Texas, and I want to tell you that General Jeff Howell is my good friend and here's General Howell." And so, there was this polite applause and very little else. It's not a hostile crowd, but it's not a friendly crowd. And so, as I was sitting there I really had, I swear it's the truth, I sort of had a serendipity, you know sort of a vision or a revelation that came over me, and it's almost like a dream. I just told them, "Before I give my speech let me tell you something, it just came to my mind that the last time I was on this campus was 40 years ago in 1957, Thanksgiving Day, I came here as one of 100 students who got tickets, from the University of Texas, to see Texas play Texas A&M in College Station. And, in that year, 1957, Texas had just come off of a one victory and nine loss season; A&M under the "Bear" Bryant was nationally ranked, they had been number one for awhile, but I think they had been upset by somebody that year so they had lost one game and were about fourth or fifth in the nation. Texas was not even ranked, under their brand new coach, Darrell Royal, and that day to everybody's surprise Bobby Lackey, of the University of Texas kicked a field goal in the fourth quarter and Texas beat Texas A&M, nine to six." And I said, "Nobody was more shocked than us UT students, but we were so elated that we decided to run out on the field and tear down the goal post. And so, we ran out on the field and immediately found ourselves surrounded by 3,000 irate

Aggies with drawn swords.” And everybody laughed about that. And I said, “I just want to let all of you know that I made two very important decisions at that moment.” I said, “The first decision was to not tear down the goal post.” And they all went, “YEAH!!! YEAH!!! YEAH!!! [loud belligerent yelling]” And I said, “The second decision was to not come back here for a long, long time, and so I’m finally coming back.” So, they gave me a big cheer, big time, so I sort of won them over. But, it was interesting, the president came up behind me. He was a big guy, I can’t even remember his name, but he leaned over my shoulder and said, “I want to confirm what the General said because I was one of the Aggies with a drawn sword that day on that field. So, he is telling you the truth.” So, I ended up—I gave my speech. I told these people to be ready for combat and that was my speech. But, I thought that that was sort of a neat experience as commander of Marine Forces Pacific at A&M.

Q: Wow. A tough place to be.

General Howell: I guess another thing is that as the Commander of Marine Forces Pacific you’re also involved in Hawaii and Hawaiian politics because of the training areas, there was a big movement—even today, but then it had really become very strong, you know we had just given Kahoolawe back to the state. It was no longer used as a target area and was given back to the state as a historic site, and you had the local Ohana, which was the great Hawaiian movement to take back the land and all that. Of course, the military was on a lot of what they thought was their land that they ought to get back, so you had that movement going on. We typically, when we would bring a Marine expeditionary unit through there on their way to a WestPac they would do a landing and an exercise there. And what we would do is we would bring them there since we owned Bellows, to the Bellows beach. They would come around to Bellows and conduct an amphibious landing at Bellows, but Bellows was a tiny little base and they couldn’t go more than a couple hundred meters inland and the exercise was over. So, then we put them on trucks and trucked them across the island to Schofield, to the Schofield range because Schofield was huge. There they could do live fire and do a lot of maneuvering and everything. But, it was really a big logistics burden and time consuming to take those Marines from that landing area over to Schofield. You wasted almost a day, of getting them over there, and you didn’t have that much time on the island. There was a beach right by Schofield called: Makua beach. It was on the western edge of the island that was actually, literally, a federal beach that belonged to the Army that could be used for exercises, that they hadn’t used in years because that side of the island was where a lot of the people lived who were in this Ohana movement. It was a real local place. I don’t know if you

remember where Barbers Point was, but it was up around the western edge of the island from Barbers Point, north of it, up on that edge.

There were a lot of locals living along the beach there. We had someone looking at a map, one of our staff officers, had recommended, "Why don't we use Makua beach for the landing? And that way they can go right through this valley, I mean they're there. They can start maneuvering and doing exercises and firing and it saves all those trucks and all that stuff." And we went to the Army and they said, "Fine with us. Good idea." You know, it was their beach, but they said, "That's a great idea. We'd love to exercise that right." I had to go to the state and brief it to the state officials. I got a personal OK from the governor of Hawaii saying that, "Hey, this is a good thing. We support this and we'll agree to this and you all can do this." So, we plan on this thing, the MEU's coming and landing there, and of course we tell the public that this is going to happen and all that about two weeks prior, you know, "This is going to happen so be prepared. The beach will be closed for about half-a-day while we bring these Marines through." We thought we had it covered. Well, the Ohana goes crazy. And man, they start picketing and protesting in the legislature and just crazy stuff. On the day before the MEU's going to arrive the Governor of Hawaii says, "You can't do it." He turned on me. He had promised me personally and he turned on me and says, "This was never my idea. I was never aware of this. This is boloney. I would never allow something like this to happen. You can't do it."

Q: Good politician.

General Howell: Yes. I never forgave that rascal for that, but I guess he had to do what he did. So, we didn't do it. We had to go land at Bellows and do the other.

Q: At the last minute too.

General Howell: Oh yeah. It was a pain. It was awful

Q: I was noticing a picture on the wall, about when you had MAG-24, what's the story behind it?

General Howell: Lieutenant General Ron Christmas was the regimental commander then, and he had a battalion up on the Pohakuloa Training Area [PTA] up on the Big Island, between the two volcanoes. It was this huge army training area that we were able to use up there. And he asked me, he said, "I would like to have a battalion move via helicopter from one place to another for a

maneuver and can you support a simultaneous movement of an entire battalion with helicopters?”

And I got with my guys and we [decided], “Yes, we can do this.” And we moved almost the entire MAG-24 helicopter force with those five or six squadrons and had them in place and had them all operating and then loaded those Marines fine; did an entire - a complete battalion and moved them simultaneously from one place to the other. That was a big deal.

And I was over there in a Huey. We had them - our Hueys supporting and observing, had Colonel Christmas. We had the brigade commander.

Q: Was that Jack Dailey?

General Howell: As I recall it was General. Dailey and it was a big deal, quite a thing of great satisfaction. And this photograph was made by a Marine photographer during that thing. I just think it is a wonderful action photograph. That was when the Marines landed and they were coming out of the helicopter, and that was - that was a great moment.

Another thing from Hawaii, that just looking at a picture, we got challenged, at some social event or something. The regiment had an artillery battalion there, the battalion artillery officer, had a battalion of 155s. He said something about how Marine air, you know, “Why do we have all this Marine air spending all this money when we have, all this artillery? And artillery can do it a lot cheaper, better, it’s there, more accurate...” and I said, “Wait a minute. You’re telling me that your artillery can hit a target quicker and better than Marine TacAir?” He said, “OH YEAH!” He said, “You guys - we spend all that money and all that fuel on you guys and artillery’s there already.” He said, “So I CHALLENGE you.” So, and Dailey’s always looking for a contest - said, “Okay, let’s have a contest.” And so we had a contest out at the Pohakuloa Area, and that’s where that photograph up there, we observed it.

We had 81’s from a battalion, out there on the big firing range we had a whole company of 155s in place and they’d been able to register their fires. So they had their guns registered. They knew what they were hitting and how they could adjust fires throughout that whole training area.

And then I had F-4s and A-4s coming in, in sections, you know with 500 pound bombs, over the area and we had the 81’s, would mark a target and we would take turns. Either the 155s got the first shot, then the air came in or the air had the shot - then the 155s. Of course we just hammered - our people just hammered wherever the mark was, and they’d [the 155s] have to adjust the mark. Well, they would even adjust them you know, and, and our guys would go with the adjustment. We had an airborne FAC that would operate, so you’d hear, “From the mark...” And the guys would just be there to call in, boom, boosch!!! [Phonetic]!, hammerin’ the target! I tell you 155s,

of course, in their favor it was a real windy day in between those volcanoes and, and you know 155s get up in that wind.... : But it showed-- they really struggled. I mean, it was embarrassing how bad. But we KICKED THEIR ASS. We – kicked – their – ass! And the 155 guys never said another word, again. That [artillery] officer he had [to eat] a lot of crow.

Q: Did you have any incidents out in town with your Marines there in Hawaii; that was always an easy place to get in trouble it seemed.

General Howell: When I was the chief of staff of the Brigade, this was in the 1986-1987 time frame, I want to say it was Valentine's Day. Janel and I had been over at some social event on the other side of the island; and had driven back and gotten back in time to get a phone call. As a matter of fact, we were at somebody's house, we were dropping them off at the house and going in for a nightcap and I get a call from the duty officer, who said, "Sir, got to talk to you now." He said, "We have had an amtrac commandeered from the amtrac park and the guy drove it out into town." They had two drunk Marines. One got upset because his girlfriend - he'd got a "Dear John" letter and he got drunk. And he'd gone and taken an amtrac. Drove through the back gate at Kaneohe [laughing] and up the Pali and got derailed in a median there on the Pali. It had lost a track or something and got jammed there. Then they got out and ran. And they didn't catch them for another five or six hours. But that was quite, I mean that was quite an event. That guy, he took the guard gate, of course, that back gate was closed at night. It was right around ten or eleven at night and he just went right through the gate, just took it down, drove over it and barreled up that road and, you know cars getting out of the way and just went right up that highway. That was a funny incident. Of course, General [George L.] Cates had only been the commanding general for about a month or two and poor guy...

Q: "Welcome Aboard!" [Chuckling]. Speaking of amtracs - any comments on the Triple AV [AAAV], or as it's known now the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle, the EFV?

General Howell: I would love to see it come. It's a very expensive machine, but it'd be nice to have something that can move that fast in the water, we need that. We really need it bad if we are really going to be a maneuver force and be able to get people in and out of there quickly. With modern, you know the modern stuff bad guys are able to get a hold of now, pinpoint accuracy of weapons using GPS [Global Positioning System] you better be able to get forces ashore quickly. But they're due and I would love to see that happen for the Marine Corps. I really believe the

Marine Corps needs to maintain its amphibious capability. The LCACs [landing craft air cushion] are great but you still need some kind of armored vehicle that can take you ashore and get in, maneuver inland. Otherwise, you know, you can't just stop at the beach. You are really in trouble then. So, then the way our maneuver warfare works you actually want to land people away from where the enemy is entrenched anyways, so you can move around them and attack from another direction.

That's why you've got to have something that can move fast and move on land and have some kind of armor on it; shouldn't be a tank or anything. So, I think it's a wonderful concept and a wonderful idea. I don't know if we'll ever have the money because the money they have is spent on the MV-22 and other things too.

Q: To wrap it up, looking back over your career, what do you regard as your most significant achievement--gives you the most pride, sense of personal accomplishment?

General Howell: Getting my wife to forgive me and stay married to me and having two wonderful children that are now productive citizens. Really-- I don't know, I don't know that [I've] achieved anything. I look back on my career as a blessing to me. That it was a wonderful gift. And no kidding, I just feel so fortunate that I had the opportunity to do the things I did, to serve with the people I served with, to have these wonderful commands, and get the credit for the achievements of those people. And I frankly don't remember achieving anything of any significance, but I know I was a part of some wonderful organizations that did great things.

Q: Most satisfying moments?

General Howell: I mentioned to you, coming back from a flight where you've just sweated and pulled g's and probably scared the hell out of yourself in an airplane, doing some maneuver that was unexpected, get out of it and still get something done and then land and walking away and feeling like a million dollars. There's nothing, there's no better feeling in my experience than total exhaustion and the relaxation and satisfaction walking away from an airplane after a tough flight. You're sweated out, tired, and just feeling like a million dollars. That is an achievement. And so, I feel good about that. Every time that happened that was a wonderful feeling and you know, those times when I would be shutting down a hangar and letting the crews go home on a Friday afternoon as a maintenance officer when they just busted their butts for 12 or 14 hours from 4 in the morning-- we try to get out of there by 1300--it's usually 16-1700 when we finally got them all out and

closing the hangar doors and watching those young Marines, you know never complaining, walking out, got it done, and they're going home, and being there with them in that time.

One of the most satisfying moments to me was when Joe Anderson, young Joe Anderson, became my maintenance control officer in [VMFA] 115, there at Nam Phong and it was always just a bloody struggle getting birds up to meet the schedule and get it done, and at the end of the day everybody's gone, everybody's gone, you know the night crews come on, but everybody that's there normally has already gone down the hill to the mess hall. And "JT", Joe, would always wait for me. He would never go without me, and I would never go without him and we'd always walk down the steps from the maintenance, 2^d floor of that Butler building and then just walk down the hill together and say, "Well, we got it done," that wonderful satisfaction of just completing the day's work with other men who are working their butts off and getting it done. That's wonderful camaraderie.

Standing at the end of a runway with six other F-4s and maybe a couple of backups, getting ready to TransPac on over to Midway or into Guam and on, and just looking down the line, being the skipper, having the lead aircraft and having eight other jets who are running there fully loaded, fully ready, you know got the signal, the pathfinder has gone over, you know timed the launch, and just that wonderful feeling of "Ready To Go." And here we go on a new adventure. That's just a wonderful feeling.

The early-early take offs in the darkness and watching the sun come up over the Pacific and looking out and seeing another F-4 and it looks so beautiful and so wicked and knowing you're in an airplane that looks just like it.

Q: Did you prefer the F-4?

General Howell: I felt the same way in an F-18. The first time I joined another F-18 on a cross country, on someone's wing, another F-18C came up and joined up. And I'm looking at it and it's a beautiful morning and clouds are around and I'm looking and I'm saying, "Gosh, what a marvelous machine! What a great looking bird." And then I think, "I'm in one just like that." I look, "just like that thing."

"Marine!" It doesn't matter that I was a Marine pilot and a Marine commander, knowing that I carry the name "Marine!" That really meant a lot to me. If you want to talk about achievement--graduating from PLCs and getting a commission, that was, if I achieved anything it was actually being called a "Marine" by my drill sergeant as a PLC. When he said, "You are now a Marine!" That's was, I guess that was the only time I really achieved anything. But, great

satisfaction!

Q: Looking back on it what was the key to success for you? You've had a very successful career, what's the key to it?

General Howell: Well, you know, sometimes it is persistence, hanging in there. It goes back to my upbringing and parents who said, "You don't ever quit a job halfway. You hang in there and finish the job." And the work I had to do as a young man, hard work. Grocery store and on a road crew and out on a pipeline and gutting it out, it sort of gave you a sense of, "You gut it out and you hang tough." Even when things aren't going well and I think that stood me well in the Marine Corps in my early years there's some times where just-- "I don't know if I really want to keep doing this but I am going to hang in there and gut it out." So I think that helped me as a Marine, hanging in there and persistence and gutting things out and being loyal. I think wherever I went, whoever I served I was loyal to that person and that unit and I think that serves you well if you get that reputation. People want that.

I think there's no doubt in my mind that I was successful because other people who had served under me made me look so good and were so good at being Marines that they made me look good. I am talking about the [William L.] "Spider" Nylands of the world. I am convinced that I was general officer because of Spider Nyland, the wonderful things he did made me look good, made my record look good. He and a bunch of other guys, but he is one of these standouts. But also above me, there were Marine officers who saw something in me that made it worthwhile, when I made mistakes to brush me off and forgive me and let me go on. There were a lot of guys, Jack Dailey and he wasn't the only one. I'll never forget the short time I had a battalion commander, his name was Cunningham but when we got back from WestPac and I was his mortar platoon leader and I only served under him for about three months, I believe, before I went to flight training. And he wrote me a wonderful fitness report, he just seemed to have a lot of faith in me and I think he put [in the fitness report] "This officer, I am convinced that he will do wonderful things and has great potential." And that really meant a lot to me because I don't remember; I just remember sort of bungling things as a mortar platoon leader. So it was the leadership, I served under people who had faith in me and the wonderful stewardship and work of the people who served with me and under me that made me successful.

Q: Coming out of the Marine Corps what did you envision, what were your plans?

General Howell: It was interesting. You know I went through the Department of the Navy, Secretary of the Navy, has a wonderful transition course for flag and general officers in Washington, a one week thing, really well done. There were wonderful instructors trying to prepare you to go out into industry and to sell yourself into being a leader or whatever you want to do out in the other world and a couple things that they insisted is, "You need to focus on what you want to do. Make a case for that and wherever you interview or whatever you go, focus on that, and go wherever that takes you." And we would have drills around the room, we had in our class at least twenty flag and general officers there who were getting ready to leave and they even had the drills around where they would give you the fifteen second interview, thirty second interview and you're supposed to come out with a spiel, "This is what I want to do." In case somebody's interviewing you; that's part of it. And every time they came around to me, "Well Jeff, what do you want to do?" I'd say, "I'm not sure. But I want to go back to Texas." That's what I would always say and that would just drive them NUTS! And then I finally told them, after they said, "Now be serious what do you want to do?" I said, "I really, I want to take teams and make them better teams. I like to take a good team and make it into a better team to do great things. I like to form teams." They said, "Well you've got to be more specific." I said, "Sorry I can't think of anything." And I was a failure in that course. It just drove him nuts. As a matter of fact he gave me a self-sealed envelope, well he probably gave it to everybody, but he made sure he said, "If you ever get a job please send me in this envelope and tell me what happened. Because I just don't know what is going to happen to you." But my intent was to go back to Texas. I wanted to get back to Texas. I love this state. This is my native land. I started networking and I had friends in Houston and Dallas and visited and I had a good friend who sent me airline tickets to help me travel around and go visit. I talked to a lot of, you know Enron, almost went to work for Enron, and thank God that didn't pan out and Houston Power and a couple of oil companies in Houston. Talked to some people, high-rollers in Dallas, and talked to USAA, was really hoping they would invite me to join USAA. I had an interview with them. And it's just timing and what-have-you - didn't work out - and if that would have been I'd probably be there now a very happy man, because what a great company.

When all is said and done I was getting a little frustrated and I called and talked to General Dailey and Mike Mott. Both who were in NASA at that time and together. They were working together. It seemed like Mike or maybe Dailey, almost simultaneously two different e-mails and we were still in Hawaii, living in our old house we bought twenty years before, getting it ready to sell. So we had moved out of quarters and I had retired. And so I get a call and they said, "Go down to Johnson Space Center [JSC]. The Center Director, name is George Abbey, and talk to

him. He can probably help out.” So I flew down to Texas.

Q: Was Dailey at NASA at this time?

General Howell: Dailey was the Deputy Administrator for NASA. And Mike Mott was a big dog in the NASA headquarters, working for him. And they were both Marines, you know of great renown, former Marines. So I go down there and I check in at JSC, I didn’t realize what a really big complex place that is. It’s about 150 different buildings and they got about 10,000 people working there everyday and another 4,000 around it, supporting it. So I go in to see Mr. Abbey and I, and another, a guy named Rich Dinkle, who was a former Marine fighter pilot, who is working there for NASA, he knows that I am coming. He is sort of my escort. He is sort of one of Abbey’s boys. Abbey--he was an interesting leader. We’ll leave him out of this now. I could write a book about it. He was a unique guy and sort of had his group. And he controlled everything at JSC. He had strings attached to everything. You were either a FOG, a “Friend of George,” or you weren’t and if you weren’t, you were in trouble. I got to report to Mr. Abbey in this big office and go through this, you know with guards and I mean he’s got this group of people protecting him. And I get up in his office and he is an interesting man. Real quiet little old hunched over guy who sort of looks like “Sad Sack.” Remember that dog?

Q: Yes [laughing].

General Howell: That’s the way he looked. George is one brilliant man but he had that personification, long face and he sort of talked real quiet, almost in a monotone. And he says, “Well?” He meets me and shakes my hand and we sit down and sit at this conference table. Dinkle’s there. He says, “Jack Dailey says you’re a good guy, so you are a good guy.” And he said, “So, I’d like for you to come to NASA to work for me at JSC. All you’ve got to do is say yes and I’ll give you a job.” And I said, “Well, Mr. Abbey,” and in those days you couldn’t double dip, so a retired officer who went to work for the federal government would have to dock that amount of pay out of his retirement, and I just tell him, I said, “Mr. Abbey, I am honored. But, I would prefer to work for a corporation or a company because I don’t want to lose my retirement. I’d like to make some money out of this deal. I’m getting older. I don’t have any money. I didn’t save much. You know, I don’t have any wealth, and so I would like to make some money. He said, “Okay, Okay, I understand that.” So he said, “Well” and called his secretary and said, “Call Honeycutt, call Turner and call Boyd. He said, “One of them is Lockheed-Martin, one of them is

United Space Alliance, and the other one is SAIC [Science Applications International Corporation].” He said, “I’ll arrange it and you go talk to them and see if they can’t use you.” He said, “I think they can.” And that’s the only thing I had to do. So, I go to Russ Turner of the United Space Alliance. I go to him first. They had the whole contract for the Shuttle. You know it’s like a billion and a half dollars a year of contracts. That’s big bucks! And I got into Turner and he said, “George Abbey sent you to see me.” And I said, “Yes.” He said, “Well, if George Abbey wants me to give you a job, you’ve got a job.” So he said, “Let me just tell you, General Howell.” He said, “I’m full up.” He said, “I’ve got, you know my leadership, I’m just packed with some great guys. I don’t really have an opening at the level you ought to come in here. But, I’ll find a way.” I said, “Well, let me go talk to these other guys.” So I’m going to go over to Lockheed-Martin. J. Honeycutt, who ends up being a great American; a great guy. He’s not in town. He’s not there at that time, so I can’t see him.

Then I go over to SAIC, and Sam Boyd was the fellow. He’s running this contract up, 500 engineers, about 20 million bucks-a-year kind of contract. I go in there and he said, “George Abbey sent you to me?” I said, “Yes.” The guy almost kissed me. He said, “God!” He said, “I’ve been trying to get a deputy contract manager in here for a year and a half, and all the guys I’ve tried to hire, Abbey shot them down and I couldn’t hire them.” He said, “Finally I got somebody.” He said, “Here’s the deal. Look into your records.” He said, “Holy Cow!” We’ve always wanted to bring somebody in and make him a deputy and then in five months you take over and I’m moving up to a different place.” He said, “So you get the contract if you want to do that.” I said, “It sounds good.” He said, “Well let me call my boss.” A guy named Hutchinson, who’s in California, was his boss. The next day they send me on an airplane out there to interview with him. I’m thinking I am going to have to prove my worth. I get into Hutchinson. He spends the whole three hours together selling me on SAIC. He said [added for context] “You see we really want you.” So, these guys are after me and so I go to work for SAIC.

Q: What were the challenges in that, going from a military to civilian work setting?

General Howell: Right away it is a whole new ball game. You are talking about the Marine Corps. I find that probably one of the best experiences of my life, that prepared me to be the center director at JSC, was to be a contractor with JSC, and see the relationship between the contractors and civil servants. On site at JSC: 10,000 people. 3,000 are civil servants. A majority of the employees and workers are contractors. And there was really a line drawn and that the civil servants are kings. Contractors are second-class citizens, and “You’d better do what we tell you or

we are going to dock your fee, or pay. I mean that was the attitude and oh by the way, George controls everything. One of the most important decisions I made-- he had an inner sanctum of both employees and civil servants who were sort of FOGs--Friends of George, who met two or three times a week at a bistro or someplace and had drinks together, with George. You were in his club, in his clique; somebody had to volunteer to drive George home that night. He had divorced and his whole life was JSC. That was his whole life, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Incredible man. Weird man, but incredible. Brilliant. But I was invited to join that club and I just stayed away from it. I said, "No thank you. Can't come."

I just took care of my contract and was very polite to Mr. Abbey. He was always very polite to me but I didn't get in that inner sanctum and thank God! You know that I stayed away from that. Well within that next three years I learned a lot about the Space Shuttle and about the International Space Station because that is what our people worked on. Our engineers were the safety and mission assurance, supervising all the work that went on there, in support of those programs, those huge programs. So I learned a lot about the engineering on those things and didn't realize everything else there was at JSC. JSC is a lot more than that, I discovered later. But it really gave me a lot of insight on the relationships of employees, the way things are run, and that there was an incredible leadership gap at all levels, both contractor and civil servant. It was just almost a reign of terror. Don't get me wrong, George Abbey was a brilliant guy who did a lot of great things but people were just scared shitless of him and he liked it that way. That's the way he ran things and he had a finger on everything. And so, while I'm there as a contractor he gets in trouble with the administrator at that time, Dan Golden. He had been Golden's right hand man. Golden gets in trouble with the Congress and others on funding matters. NASA finds itself with almost a half of a billion dollars in their budget they can't identify where the money went and that kind of stuff. He blames Abbey and fires Abbey. Abbey gets run off the center. We come in with an interim Center director, a guy named Estes, who is a really a wonderful fellow. He was the Stennis Space Center director and he just comes over as a temp. Never turns on his computer, never sits at the desk, just sort of rides herd on JSC. He was going to be there for about three months until they get a new Center director. He ends up there for almost a year as a temporary. And I'm minding my cotton--I'm just doing my job. Golden, the administrator, leaves and then Sean O'Keefe comes in as administrator. Sean had been Secretary of the Navy when I had 2d MAW. So, I realized that he had come in. We hear that he is bringing Charlie Bolden in, who's getting out, to be his deputy. You know, taking them all along. And I'm saying, "That will be a great team."

Q: How well did you know Bolden?

General Howell: I know Charlie well. Charlie and I were in Nam Phong together. He was an A-6 pilot in Nam Phong and we met. But then, we really got to know each other when he was a General officer. He served under me in MarForPac [Marine Forces Pacific]. He was assistant wing [commander]. Then Assistant MEF commander when I was MarForPac.

Q: And then later on he had the [3rd] Wing?

General Howell: Yes, later on after I left and he's just a great American. He is a great man. So, I, through some friends, let Sean O'Keefe know, "If you're looking for a Center Director down here, I'm around. Because I just thought this place needs a new beginning. They need some leadership and I think I can provide it." And low and behold, and after four months of interviews and talking and all that, all the sudden he calls me. Sean calls me one day; I think it was Valentine's Day of 2002, "Hey! You want it. You got it. I want you today." one of these deals. And so I said, "Hey, I owe it to my company to give them some time." [Then he said] "So when?" I said, "April 1st [of 2002]." And so he said, "Okay, April 1st it is." You know it was a Monday; and second, it was my wedding anniversary and my son's birthday. So, I said, "Why not do it on April Fool's Day?" It's been a good day for me. And so I became the Center Director of JSC and you asked me that question. I really believe that my whole Marine Corps experience and the opportunity to be a contractor there, really prepared me well to try to help JSC come out a, sort of a, dark period.

Q: Can you describe that situation, how you approached it?

General Howell: There were a lot of, it wasn't just George Abbey, but it was the whole Shuttle thing, International Space Station, human space flight was under the gun, there were budget problems, 'we're wasting our time just circling the earth', you know 'self-licking ice cream cone', all that stuff. And JSC was sort of the center of human space flight, even though Kennedy and Marshall were a big part of that. And so my whole function there, beginning with trying to get those people to realize how special they were; it didn't take me long, as the Center director, to find out those people are just incredible people. Most the people there are engineers, scientists, PhD's and they're wise and they're dedicated to what they are doing. I just, I told my new deputy, I said, "We can't lose. This is a winning organization and they just don't know it." So I tried to build an esprit and a pride that Marines have in what they do, because they deserve that. And we were

working on that. I was having to change some things. I had some people who had been in positions too long, at the highest levels and they were “Friends of George.” And I was trying to move them and then Columbia came along...

Q: Yes, the disaster, the crash.

General Howell: Columbia came along and just shook everything up.

Q: How so?

General Howell: It just shattered us. It was a catastrophe and we had a Columbia accident investigation board, and of course, they said we were screwed up and NASA is screwed up; but JSC is REALLY screwed up. And some of that was true, but it wasn't to the degree that they said. Really, after that, I found out, I just realized that my purpose there was to get those people out of the Columbia doldrums and bring them back up to being proud and getting them back into space. So that became my mission for the next two years as Center Director. And I cannot tell you how important it was when we launched Discovery last summer. You know, got it back with Eileen Collins into space. That was a long time coming-- two and a half years. And I just cannot tell you how wonderful I felt with that achievement and then we got a new administrator; Sean left us. Mike Griffin came in, great guy, wants to do the right thing, very different personality. Really, had been with NASA before, he had his own ideas and he really felt it was important to bring in his own team of his handpicked people in key billets and he was very kind to me. He said, “Jeff, I have nothing but great reports on you, good leader. I like you personally, but I really want my own guy in here and so what do you want to do?” And you know I said, “I need a year and a half before I can retire from the federal service; I would really like to get that.” He said, “Where do you want to go?” And so that's how I ended up at the University of Texas.

Janelle: Let me in that briar patch !! [phonetic].

Q: You relied on your Marine Corps experience, leadership at JSC sounds like.

General Howell: Frankly, I really believe that my Marine Corps experience and training was the perfect preparation to help me, whatever I achieved with JSC of helping them, get back on their feet after Abbey and then after the Columbia mishap. You know how you think about “Is there a

reason for things?” I think there was a reason why I was there, and that was to help those people in that terrible experience. And the Marine Corps, and my Marine Corps training was the reason why I think I was capable to provide the help that I did. So it was very important. The key, any success I had at JSC was because of the Marine Corps experience I had. No doubt about it. So that was a great experience, very intense, very hard work. Just as tough as being a platoon leader or the commander of MarForPac, JSC was even more demanding than that, believe it or not.

Janel: And a pay cut.

General Howell: Just intense as hell. Yes, you know I took a pay cut from SAIC to become a Center Director and a federal employee. She reminds of that all the time.

Janel: [Laughing]

Q: But it’s more fun though right?

Janel: Most the time.

General Howell: Overall it was an incredible experience, a lot of perks.

Q: Well, where were you the day you had the Columbia disaster?

General Howell: The Center director is a member of the launch decision team, so I always went down to Kennedy for the launch. I was actually in the launch site, right there at the console and we would launch the Shuttles. I got to do that several times.

Q: That must have been really impressive.

General Howell: It was incredible. It was a wonderful experience and --I could talk for hours about the sort of rituals they go through from the Mercury days. It’s really fun. It’s a great [place]. Kennedy’s got great people too. And NASA is really loaded with wonderful people. But, for landings I would always be back at JSC. You know the minute the Shuttle leaves the ground it comes under the control of Mission Control in Houston. And it controls it right down to touchdown. So for approaches and landings I would always be back at Johnson at Mission

Control, you've probably seen the pictures of Mission Control, all the consoles. Well, up above there they have sort of a General public viewing area with the seats. But then, on one side they have the Center Director's loft. It's basically a little special room there with glass windows. Well, you sit in there you've got monitors and you can come in there with your senior staff and sort of monitor; it's probably to keep the Center director off the floor; keep you out of their way. And so, that's where I would be for all the landings and I was up there with John Young, who walked on the moon, and several of my senior directors: the director of engineering, the head of Mission Control, the Shuttle Program Manager, Ron Dittamore. We were up there that day, waiting as it came down and very happy. It had been such a great mission. It had been a very successful mission, they accomplished wonderful things. Coming down, everything's just doing great, 16 minutes away from landing when all that happened.

Q: No inkling that anything was wrong?

General Howell: No. Well we had, on launch some foam had come off and struck the vehicle.

Q: Was there any concern about that?

General Howell: No, there was some concern by some engineers. But as a rule it had happened it every launch. People don't want to know that, but the foam had come off and struck the thing on every launch that it had, but, never a piece that big. We didn't realize how big the piece was and it hit right in a critical point. If it would have bounced off the belly it would have been one thing. It hit the leading edge at 90 degrees going 760 feet per second and cracked that leading edge of that reinforced carbon-carbon and that's why it let the plasma in. The thing is basically made out of aluminum, so you've got hot, 3,000 degree, plasma in there. It just melted it and it came apart. But, I was there when that happened and we lost touch and people saw it on CNN before we realized what had happened at Mission Control.

So we started getting phone calls and you know one thing you'll never forget, Ron Dittamore is dialing his people to get the rapid reaction team organized and going; we had contingency plans for that kind of thing. But he looked up at me; I was standing right there by him by the phone. He said, "You have just entered your worst nightmare." And he was right. It was a nightmare that went on for weeks.

Q: What was the worst part about it?

General Howell: Seeing the families. They were at the Cape waiting for the landing. We got them together. They briefed them and brought them on NASA airplanes back. They all live right there with us and I was out at Ellington to receive them when they came in and give them my condolences, and it was just awful. And then going to the memorial services and going to all the burials, attended all them and dealing with all of that and the families. Initially, they were just so sad and grieving and later they became very angry and blamed NASA for killing their spouses, and had to go through all that. Met with them regularly and let them just unload on me and how awful we were. And “Well, we’ll take care of it and see what we can do. I understand how you feel.” It’s just terrible.

Q: They were all like that?

General Howell: Yes, to a different degree. Some of them to this day are still angry. Most of them recovered. Some, but you can’t blame them. You can’t blame them. But, they’re all wonderful people; they are. The astronauts were wonderful people and their families were, too. So that was an incredible trial and stressful as hell; we were really under the gun.

Q: As Center director how much responsibility was yours?

General Howell: One thing that sort of came out, you know the program, the Shuttle program, did not belong to me. It belonged to Headquarters, who was at DC. So, I really wasn’t in the chain of command to the Shuttle decision. I just supported it. Now prior, when Abbey was there, it belonged to him. But part of the deal when he was fired was the realization that he had too much power and he was controlling a budget that needed more daylight from the headquarters. And so they had moved the program executive officer in control of both the Shuttle and Station programs to Headquarters NASA, even though the program headquarters were still at JSC. So that, when you had this terrible catastrophe, you know one year prior it would have been my total responsibility and fault. I was still partly responsible. I was on the launch team that launched it - you know that said, “It’s okay to go.” But, that really, the chain of command, I was really outside the chain of command for the decision-making on the Shuttle itself. I just supported the operation. But, JSC is joined at the hip with those programs. I mean you’re just together. All your engineers work in support of those programs. It’s a hell of an operation. I got to tell you, very complex, a lot of science going on, the planning for those missions, the training of the astronauts. It’s incredible.

But, you realize you know when we lost Columbia, the entire nation was wounded by that. So that's when you realize how, really the Shuttle program, the space programs, the human space program is part of the national ego and ethos. You realize that when something bad happens to NASA, something bad happens to the whole United States.

Q: They really identify with it.

General Howell: Yes, and particularly the human aspect of it. So that was a realization of how important human space flight is to the people of America. So, it was an incredible experience. I feel very, once more, grateful that I had the opportunity to be the Center Director of JSC. And I am proud of having done that, you know being a part of that and having that experience. It was one of those great things. They treated me very well. They were wonderful, loyal workers there who worked for me.

Janel: Talk about going to the White House with the families.

General Howell: Well that's beyond this.

Janel: Well, tell him something.

General Howell: When we buried a couple of the astronauts up in Arlington-- it was Mike Anderson, Air Force, one of the mission specialists, a black officer. The day of his burial, Janel and I are of course up there as part of that. They, the whole group of astronaut families, were invited to come to the White House, to visit with the President - with Bush. And we were with them, and so we went with them you know through the Executive Office Building and down and through and out. You know, all the security and all that stuff and ended up in the Roosevelt Room, right outside the Oval Office, with them. And they took them in, individually, to see him and then they'd stay and they would start bringing people in. And Sean O'Keefe goes in and a couple of other heavies go in. But, we were out there in the Roosevelt Room with a couple other families, you know escorts saying, "Well it was nice being here." And low and behold about ten minutes later somebody comes up and says, "Hey, don't ya'll want to come in too?" and we said, "Well yes, we'd love to." So, we end up in the Oval Office with this throng of people and with the President and his wife, and the dogs and the kids are running around. You know, families with their children are there and so they were just gracious. They were just wonderful and talked to all

of them and hugging all the kids and letting them play with their dogs and the President took them outside on the lawn and let them run around with the dogs and then comes back in. It was cold-- it was cold. And so, he sees Janel and me standing there and he said, "We haven't had our photograph made together, have we?" I said, "No, sir." He told us, "Come here." Then he yells "Laura!" and she was sitting over a couch with a bunch of astronaut families. So President Bush said, "Get over here. We need our photo taken with these folks." And so, we stand in front of the desk there at the Oval Office and had our photograph made with the President.

Q: That's something!

General Howell: It's been an hour or so for this event, and his aides are looking at their watches and, you know, whispering to him. And he turns to his wife, he said, "You know, we ought to give all these folks a tour of the whole White House." And so she said, "That's a great idea!" So, the President and his wife lead this entourage all the way from the West Wing all the way to the East Wing, where all the Red Room, and the Blue Room, and the Reception Room. I mean [they] took us through all those rooms, all those paintings, and Mrs. Bush describes all the people on the paintings and what goes on in these places, and he's just along saying, "Well, tell them about that, Laura, and tell them about that." Shows the chandelier that Mrs. Kennedy had dipped in gold to make it a golden chandelier and all that and it was just neat!

Q: Well that's a memorable event if there ever was one.

General Howell: It was incredible. We spent another whole hour doing that. Then finally, he said, "Hey, I got to go. We're leaving." So, we're thinking, "Oh God! How do we get back to where all of our stuff is?" Well all those aides had brought our stuff over to the East Wing and it's sitting right there waiting for us, our overcoats, and bags, you know, parasols and everything and they usher us out. You know that beautiful picture of that hanging lamp and that side door?

Q: Yes.

General Howell: Well we went right out that door and walked out. Going outside the gate and immediately are told by a security guy, "GET ACROSS THE STREET! You are not allowed here!"

Janel: [Laughing]

General Howell: It was really funny. So one minute we were with the President and the next minute, “You’re not supposed to be here! Leave! Get across there!” So that was hilarious.

Q: Anything else?

General Howell: That’s enough I think.

Q: Well thank you very much, sir.

General Howell: Thank you. I’m flattered that you would consider me for this and you know I appreciate it. You know it was good to talk and my apologies to all those names I couldn’t remember. I might be getting Alzheimer’s, but I’ve been this way all my life.

INDEX

1

12th Air Force Headquarters, 111
1st Battalion, 3d Marines, 29
1st MAB, 249
1st Marine Brigade, Hawaii, 175
1st Marine Division, 16, 17, 57
1st MAW, 66, 70, 194
1st Wing Headquarters, 128

2

212 Wives' Association, 185
2d Army, 338
2d Battalion, 5th Marines, 24, 57
2d Battalion, 7th Marines, 17
2d Marine Aircraft Wing, 216, 221
2d Marine Division, 293
2d MAW, 54, 55, 204, 221, 230, 242, 258, 265, 279, 286, 287, 288, 312, 314, 332, 333, 383, 397
2d Wing, 286, 304, 334, 335

3

3d Battalion, 3d Marines, 19, 21, 57
3d Battalion, 9th Marines, 143
3d MAW, 292, 380, 381
3d Wing, 350

4

4th Marine Division, 350

7

7th Marine Division, 17

8

80-Hour Wonders, 62
81 platoon, 24

9

94th Fighter Squadron, 124

A

A.J Squared Away, 16, 17
A-4, 45, 54, 73, 96, 104, 106, 122, 124, 125, 308
A-6, 54, 73, 87, 96, 108, 152, 189, 192, 262, 347, 398
Intruder, 255
A-7, 139, 228, 229
Abbey, George, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 402

ACM

air combat maneuvering, 46, 53, 69, 137, 155, 180, 197, 205

ACMC

Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, 173, 283, 326, 341

acrobatics hops, 37

ACTI

air combat tactics instructor, 69, 311

Adams, Rick, 130

ADI

attitude direction indicator, 337

AF-9, 44, 106

Afghanistan, 261, 308

Air America, 144

Air Force ROTC, 7

Air War College, 217, 219, 221

air-to-air, 61, 77, 104, 138, 141, 188, 204, 338, 357

air-to-ground, 47, 62, 68, 75, 85, 87, 104, 137, 141, 204, 337, 338

air-to-mud. *See* air-to-ground

Albo, Michael "Dog Food", 247

Albright, Jake, 154

Allied Forces Northern Command, 12, 265, 266, 273, 370

Allied Forces Southern Command, 270

ALO

air liaison officer, 21

Amman, Jordan, 360

Amos, Jim, 248, 289, 290, 339

AMRAAM

advanced medium range air-air missile, 357

Amtracs, 276

Anaukwa tree, 7

Anderson, Joseph T., 118, 124, 141, 155, 156

Anderson, Michael, 403

Andersonville, 2

Andreas, Ronald C., 202

Andrews Air Force Base, 111, 164, 330

anti-military, 114

anti-war, 114

AOM

all officers meeting, 86, 191, 192

APA

Amphibious Transport Attack, 21

APP

Aviation Plans and Programs, 222, 223, 228, 229, 230, 240, 250, 251, 254, 255, 259, 263

Arabian Gulf, 362

Army Air Corps, 7

Arnold Air Society, 8

arrested landing, 44, 55, 336

Article 15, 143

Ashau Valley, 98, 145

Asker, 267

ASO

Aviation Safety Officer, 89

Atlanta, Georgia, 66, 67, 104, 127, 331

ATO

Alpha Tau Omega, 8
Atsugi, 190, 192
Auschwitz, 134
Austin, Texas, 1, 3, 6, 110, 113, 127, 149, 161, 329
Australian armed forces, 364
Aviano, Italy, 291, 307, 312
Aviation protocol, 47
AWG-10, 121, 133, 177, 198
AWG-9, 177

B

B-52, 138, 139, 337
Bahrain, 360
bailout, 35
Baker, Doyle, 108, 124
Ballard, James, 68, 129
Bancroft Hall, 162
Barbers Point, 214, 235, 388
BarCAP
 barrier combat air patrol, 139, 140
Barksdale Air Force Base, 336
Barrel Roll, 144
Barrow, Robert, 212, 219, 231
Basic School, 9, 12, 13, 15, 20, 24, 26, 27, 28, 49, 220
Bauer, Harold, 90, 91
Bauer, William, 90
Beaufort, South Carolina, 125, 126, 178, 248, 298, 336
Bedard, Emil "Buck", 309, 341
Beeville, Texas, 43, 44, 47, 48, 53
Belmont, Texas, 1
Bender, David "Wildman", 196
Bergstrom Air Force Base, 110, 111
Bibler, Jay, 153
Billy Mitchell, 23
bingo, 4, 79, 88, 89, 131, 155
Bird Dogs, 144
Black Hawk, 260
Black Knights. *See* VMFA-314
Black Lion 4, 144
Black River, 138
Blade 2, 146
Blankenship, Leroy I., 86
BLC
 boundary layer control, 59
Blot, Harry, 254, 314
Blue Angels, 44
Blues Brothers, 242, 243, 245, 246, 247, 288
Boeing, 106, 259, 378
Bogue Field, 55, 335
Bolden, Charlie, 397, 398
Boomer, Walter, 173
BOQ
 bachelors' officers' quarters, 22, 41, 202, 205, 206, 208, 232
Bosnia, 291
Bowls, Kent, 167
Boxer
 LHD-4, 360
Boyd, John, 356
Boyington, Pappy, 90, 152

Brabham, James A., 162
Bradshaw, Harvery "Harv", 74, 93, 94, 95, 102
Brandtner, Marty, 218
Bray, Ronald, 115, 116
Brenner, Jinx, 278
Brickley, John P., 12, 29
Brigade of Midshipman, 166
Brinkley, Randy, 311
Broadway, 244
Brown, Gary, 330
Brown, Les, 137
Burns, Rag, 242
Bush, George W., 404
Bush, Laura, 404
Butler building, 134, 135, 392
Butler, "Dee", 163

C

C-130, 65, 69, 70, 71, 72, 117, 129, 138, 139, 155, 208, 242, 295, 300
C-135, 139
C-141
 Starlifter, 378
C-47, 72
C-5, 146, 378
Cactus Comet, 124
Cactus Air Force, 90
CAG
 carrier air group commander, 192, 290, 291, 339
Callella, Thomas, 166
Cambodia, 142, 188
Camp Beak, 332
Camp Hansen, 67
Camp Las Pulgas, 17, 18
Camp Lejeune, 253, 297, 315, 338
Camp Pendleton, 16, 17, 20, 24, 47, 314, 325, 357, 381
Camp Santa Margarita, 24
Camp Schwab, 21, 23, 25, 47, 352, 356
Camp Shafter, 373
Camp Smith, 232, 351, 354
Campbell, Thomas, 8, 169
CAP
 combat air patrol, 77, 78, 149
Carey, Harry, 6
carrier Navy, 32
carrier quals, 35, 38, 41, 44, 53, 329
Carter, Jimmy, 164, 171
CAS
 close air support, 62, 75, 82, 93, 98, 99, 144, 160, 358, 359
"Caster Oil", 76
CAT
 Catapult, 43, 278
Catch-22, 157
Cates, George L., 241, 247, 249, 250, 390
CAX
 combined arms exercise, 62, 336
Central Command, 173, 270, 343, 344, 347, 363, 367, 368

CH-46
 Cobras, 223, 228, 229, 233, 237, 259, 261, 304, 336, 337, 340
 CH-53,
 Huey, 179, 233, 237, 240, 261, 304, 340
 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, 326, 341, 353
 Charlies
 USMC uniform, 179
 Charm school, 265
 Cheney, Richard, 259
 Cherry Point, North Carolina, 46, 54, 55, 57, 58, 77, 107, 170, 217, 287, 288, 290, 296, 298, 311, 312, 333
 Chiang Kai-Shek, 377
 China Lake, 306
 Chocolate Mountains, 62
 Christmas bombings, 138
 Christmas, Ronald, 114, 242, 245, 325, 388, 389
 Chu Lai, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 76, 78, 79, 81, 94, 96, 97, 100, 101, 127, 132, 141, 149, 158, 175, 189
 Church, John, 175
 CI
 counter-intelligence, 136
 CIA
 Central Intelligence Agency, 144
 CINCPac, 235, 243, 312, 315, 316, 318, 343, 351, 352, 354
 CINCPacFleet, 235, 244
 Clark Air Force Base, 69, 205, 364
 Clinton, Hilary, 376
 Clinton, William Jefferson, 326, 372, 374, 375
 close air support, 62, 75, 76, 96, 98, 149, 150, 160, 285, 308, 358
 CNATRA
 Chief of Naval Air Training, 53
 CNO
 Chief of Naval Operations, 207, 224, 280, 282, 283
 CNO Safety Award, 207
 Cobra Gold, 343, 368
 COD
 carrier on board delivery, 224
 Code Thunder, 205
 Cold War, 271, 272
 Cole, Paul, 92
 Collins, Eileen, 399
 ComEx
 communication exercises, 334
 Command and Staff College, 168, 169, 170, 171, 174, 175
 Commandant of Midshipman, 161
 Commandant of the Marine Corps, 219, 253, 255, 285, 286, 323, 385
 Commander of Combined Marine Forces Korea, 345
 ComNavEur
 Commander US Naval Forces Europe, 266
 Con Thien, 150
 Confederacy, 2
 Congressional Medal of Honor, 303
 Conley, Thomas, 38, 39, 47, 48
 Conlon, Joseph "Skoshie", 120, 122, 125, 129
 Cooper, Charles, 234, 235, 240, 244
 Cope Thunder, 204

Cordova, Frank, 154
 Corps of Cadets, 385
 Corpus Christi Naval Air Station, 3, 106, 181
 Cote, Dick "Coyote", 179, 198
 CPX's
 command post exercises, 332, 368
 Cronkite, Walter, 127
 Cuba, 17
 Cuban Missile Crisis, 17
 Cubi Point, 22, 47, 85, 87, 88, 102, 149, 182, 186, 196, 205, 208, 214, 215
 Culler, Carson, 155
 Cummings, John, 178
 Cushing, Paul, 215
 Cushman, Robert, 161

D

D Company, 12
 Da Nang, 61, 70, 71, 73, 77, 96, 97, 100, 102, 103, 109, 117, 128, 129, 132, 133, 136, 149, 150, 151
 Dailey, Jack "Zorro", 100, 156, 222, 223, 224, 225, 230, 235, 236, 237, 241, 242, 244, 245, 247, 250, 256, 257, 263, 283, 284, 287, 325, 326, 389, 393, 394, 395
 Darwin, Australia, 363, 371
 DAS
 deep air support, 98, 146
 Dash-2, 179
 Davis, Jefferson, 2
 Day, James L., 13, 26
 DCS/Aviation
 Deputy Chief of Staff for Aviation, 120, 223, 250, 254, 255, 262, 278, 285, 286, 293, 300, 314, 325
 Decatur, Georgia, 67
 DeFries, Chris, 202
 Department of U.S. and International Studies, 162
 Desert Storm, 173, 270, 310, 334, 350, 357
 DFC
 Distinguished Flying Cross, 93, 95, 96, 145
 Diem, Ngo, 19
 Dijon, "Dutch", 153
 Dilucete, Dennis, 166
 Dinkle, Rich, 395
 Dittamore, Ronald, 401
 Ditto, John, 45, 46, 164, 221, 311
 Ditto, Susan, 45
 Dixon, Thomas, 88
 DMZ, 75, 102, 128, 195, 345
 DOR
 Drop On Request, 16
 Douglas (McDonnell-Douglas), 106, 228, 279, 280
 Douglas Plant, 106
 Downs, Michael, 12, 313
 Driscoll, Dan, 166, 190, 191, 193, 197, 204, 215
 Duffy, Thomas, 127, 129
 Dunleavy, Richard, 280, 281

E

E-28, 81
 EA-6, 174, 192

EA-6B, 174, 190, 262, 294, 304
 Eagles. *See* VMFA-115
 Easter Invasion, 128
 Echternach, David "Nacho", 145, 146
 Edwards, Air Force Test Pilot School, 306
 EFV
 Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle, 390
 Eglin Air Force Base, 330
 Ehlert, Norm, 255
 El Toro, 113, 119, 128, 222, 242, 278, 311
 Ellington Air Force Base, 402
 Ellis, Russ, 120, 121
 Estrella
 surface-to-air missile, 132

F

F-1
 Mitsubishi, 201
 F-100, 98
 F-11
 Tigers, 44, 48, 53, 54
 F-111, 151, 294
 F-14
 Tomcat, 121, 225, 226, 228, 262, 281, 339
 F-18
 Hornet, 125, 174, 196, 215, 226, 228, 233, 255, 262, 263, 264, 278, 279, 288, 290, 291, 294, 304, 320, 336, 337, 338, 347, 357, 363, 364, 380, 392
 F-4
 Phantom, 10, 53, 54, 55, 58, 59, 61, 64, 65, 67, 69, 73, 77, 82, 88, 104, 108, 113, 117, 124, 126, 127, 133, 134, 139, 140, 145, 146, 154, 155, 175, 177, 197, 198, 210, 226, 228, 233, 234, 236, 237, 240, 264, 278, 290, 330, 333, 338, 392
 F-4B, 59, 120, 127, 133, 138
 F4D, 35
 F-8
 Crusaders, 54, 117
 F-9, 43, 44, 47, 104, 106, 158
 FAC
 forward air controller, 21, 62, 76, 77, 82, 83, 84, 94, 95, 97, 98, 132, 144, 146, 147, 149, 150, 264, 389
 Fairfax, Virginia, 232
 FAM, 38, 41, 45, 46, 54, 59, 63, 68, 70, 77, 82, 104, 107, 120, 175, 177
 FAM hops, 41
 family readiness, 185, 212, 312, 381, 382, 383, 384
 FARP
 forward arming and refueling points, 334
 Farrell, Frederick L. "Kenny", 74
 FAST FAC, 98
 Faulkner, James P., 87
 Faulkner, Pat, 45, 100, 101, 189
 FCLP
 field carrier landing practice, 42
 female Marines, 312
 fire and maneuver, 26, 27
 First Methodist Church of Victoria, Texas, 10
 First World War, 3
 Fisher, Barney, 195, 196, 216

Fitch, William, 223, 224, 225, 230, 262, 263, 284
 Fitzpatrick, Thomas E. "Tut", 193, 194, 195, 209
 flight deck, 42
 FLIR, 229
 FMF
 Fleet Marine Forces, 16, 253, 315, 354
 FMFPac
 Fleet Marine Forces, Pacific 95, 226, 232, 233, 234, 235, 240, 243, 315, 316, 319, 343, 365, 368, 371
 FOB
 forward operating base, 334
 FOD
 foreign object damage, 200, 338
 Foley, Sylvester Robert, 235, 236, 241, 242, 244
 Ford, Michael, 86
 formation take-off, 44
 Forrest Sherman Field, 38, 331
 Fort McPherson, 367
 Foster Air Force Base, 7
 FRAG, 75, 82, 102, 130, 134
 Franks, Tommy, 350, 367
 Fratacangelo, Paul "Frat," 80, 81, 292, 379
 Freeland, Fred, 176
 French, John "Zeus", 13, 120, 121
 Fresnel lens, 43, 336
 Frizell, William, 193, 208, 214
 FSSG
 Fleet Service Support Group, 297, 310, 335, 370, 381
 Futenma Field, 352

G

Galbraith, John Kenneth, 114
 Ganier, Milton, 141
 Garagiola, Joseph, 6
 Garten, Ron, 13
 Gator Navy, 31, 32
 GCA
 ground controlled approach-precision approach, 80, 131, 337, 338
 GCI
 ground controlled intercept, 64, 65, 70, 87, 198
 Geiger, Roy S., 90
General Mann, 18
 Gentz, Richard, 224
 German Navy, 271
 Gitmo, 310
 Glencoe, Georgia, 64, 65
 Global War on Terror
 GWOT, 349
 Goldwater-Nichols, 265, 266
 Graham, John "Pagan", 190, 197, 198, 199, 200, 289, 325
 Gray, Al, 171, 251, 252, 253, 255, 256, 257, 263, 265, 277, 285, 286, 335
 Gray, Dwayne, 232, 234, 235, 236, 244, 246, 247
 Great Barrier Reef, 364
 Great Depression, 4
 Green Flag, 178
 Gregory, Don, 61

Griffin, Michael, 399
 Grovsner Square, 267
 Guadalcanal, 8, 90, 135, 293
 Guadalupe River, 2
 Guam, 352, 392
 Gulf War, 215, 271, 286, 293, 296, 312, 316, 378
 gun deck
 falsify, 56
 gunnery pattern, 41

H

H&MS
 Headquarters & Maintenance Squadron (Hams) 54,
 55, 56, 67, 152, 233
 H&MS training officer, 55
 H&MS-15, 152
 H-34
 HUS, 21, 302
 Hagaman, Harry "The Horse", 213
 Hailston, Earl "The Pearl", 142, 289, 379, 380
 Hallet, David, 20
 Hamilton, Ray, 60
 hamsters. *See* H&MS
 Hancock Village, 60
 Hanoi, 139, 140
 Happy Hour, 47, 88, 127, 144, 189, 212, 213
 HARM
 high speed anti-radiation missile, 147
 Harriers, 45, 46, 124, 156, 174, 227, 228, 229, 230,
 254, 258, 260, 261, 263, 265, 279, 280, 291, 293,
 304, 305, 306, 308, 336, 347, 366, 380
 Hatch, Lou, 144
 Havelock, North Carolina, 45, 60, 66
 Hawaii, 23, 87, 114, 142, 155, 159, 175, 176, 178, 185,
 187, 214, 226, 231, 232, 233, 242, 246, 250, 251,
 257, 314, 315, 316, 319, 320, 343, 348, 353, 368,
 369, 370, 373, 375, 376, 381, 387, 388, 389, 390,
 394
 Headquarters Marine Corps, 18, 22, 67, 70, 77, 109,
 111, 120, 126, 152, 164, 201, 221, 222, 227, 230,
 240, 250, 251, 253, 261, 263, 265, 267, 277, 278,
 281, 283, 286, 287, 298, 300, 314, 325, 334, 340,
 346, 354, 379, 381, 384
 Hearney, Richard D., 242, 254, 263, 286, 288, 289,
 293, 326, 327, 341
 heart murmur, 33
 helicopter fire, 26
 helicopter pilots, 25, 40, 302
 Hickam Air Force Base, 354, 375
 Hill Air Force Base, 278
 HMM-262, 340
 HMM-364
 Purple Foxes, 340
 HMX-1, 249
 Ho Chi Minh Trail, 75, 133, 144
 HOK, 25
 Hollingsworth, Robert, 342
 Holly Springs, Mississippi, 1
 Holmberg, Eugene S. "Mule", 61
 Honey Grove, Texas, 4
 Honolulu Country Club, 242

Hopgood, Marvin T., 385, 386
 Horn of Africa, 362
 Hornick, Jerry, 57
 hot pad, 74, 160
 Howell Intermediate School, 6
 Howell, Emily, 4
 Howell, Henrietta, 4
 Howell, Jane, 4
 Howell, Janel (Crutchfield), 56, 57, 60, 63, 66, 67, 70,
 85, 107, 127, 158, 162, 163, 176, 185, 212, 232,
 237, 243, 244, 245, 246, 255, 267, 274, 275, 287,
 288, 313, 316, 317, 326, 327, 331, 349, 374, 375,
 390, 399, 400, 403, 404, 405
 Howell, Jay, 63, 66, 85, 113, 174, 232, 267, 268
 Howell, Joy, 4
 Howell, Melissa, 113, 267
 Howell, Watt, 3, 6
 Hubner, John, 74, 76, 77, 84, 85, 86, 100
 Hue, 82, 102
 Hueys
 UH-1, 102, 103, 233, 340, 389
 Hurricane Andrew, 309
 Hussein, Saddam, 348
 Hutchinson, Robert N., 85, 86, 103, 396
 Hyde Park, 267
 Hyde, Hugh, 13

I

I Corps, 71, 83, 94, 133, 150, 157, 160
 I MEF, 67, 344, 368, 381
 "I'm a Soul Man", 246
 ICS
 inter-cockpit communications system, 78
 Ie Shima, 68
 IG
 inspecting General, 55, 111, 281, 326, 341
 II MEF, 296
 III MEF, 344, 368, 380, 381
 Indianola, Texas, 2
 Indonesia, 14, 343, 364, 371
 Infantry protocol, 47
 Inkey Barley, 62
 International Space Station, 397, 398
 Iran, 342, 344, 345, 349
 Iraq, 342, 344, 348, 349, 350, 367, 372
 IUT
 instructor under training program, 105
 Ivy, Henry, 34, 137, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157
 Iwakuni, 46, 67, 68, 70, 71, 81, 83, 84, 85, 93, 96, 102,
 128, 129, 175, 176, 188, 189, 190, 196, 197, 202,
 205, 208, 226, 227, 299, 380
Iwo Jima, 21, 25, 302, 322
 IWSR
 integrated weapons systems review, 121, 137

J

J-79 engines, 55
 Jackson, Glenn, 76
 James, Sonny, 23, 28
 Japanese Air Defense Force, 197, 203

Japanese Self-Defense Force, 353
 Jaroch, Roger "Stretch", 249
 JFACC
 joint forces air component commander, 294
 John Paul Jones Leadership Award, 211, 220
 Johns Hopkins, 33
 Johnson, Andrew "Bunt", 13, 20
 Johnson, Joseph, 187
 Johnson, Lyndon B., 3
 Johnston, Robert, 314, 315, 316
 Jolly Green, 102, 139, 140
 Jordan, 360, 363
 Jordan, Kenny, 13
 JSC
 Johnson Space Center, 51, 247, 394, 395, 396, 397,
 398, 399, 400, 402, 403

K

Kahoolawe, 180, 387
 Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii
 K-Bay, 10, 155, 176, 214, 232, 235, 237, 240,
 320, 344, 369, 372, 373, 374, 375, 390
 Kansas Tower, 374
 Kearns, Timothy, 17, 21
 Keflavik, Iceland, 225
 Kehoe, Michael, 66
 Kelley, Paul X., 13, 26, 222, 231, 340
 Kelso, Frank, 280
 Kennedy Space Center, 400
 Kennedy, John F., 13
 Kent State, 116
 Kerr, Graham, 145, 147, 176
 Key Volunteers, 290, 383
 Key Wives, 313
 Keys, William, 292, 293, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 315,
 338
 Khe Sahn, 98, 100
 Kilo Company, 19
 King Hussein, 360
 King Ranch Headquarters, 107
 Kingsville Naval Air Station, 48, 106, 107, 108, 111,
 118, 158, 181
 Kipsgaard, B. J., 275
 Kitty Baggage, 62
 Knutson, Barry, 142
 Kolses, 269, 273
 Korea, 7, 13, 19, 85, 94, 112, 194, 319, 342, 343, 344,
 345, 347, 348, 368, 369, 381
 Korean Command, 173
 Korean War, 347
 Kranker, Peter, 230
 Krisiean, Rick, 137
 Kron, Ron, 119
 Krone, Mel, 95
 Krulak, Charles C., 162, 242, 257, 314, 315, 316, 317,
 318, 319, 321, 322, 324, 325, 326, 327, 340, 342,
 343, 346, 348, 351, 355, 365, 384, 385
 Krulak, Victor, 95, 315, 323, 324, 381
 Krupp, Denny, 104, 105, 142, 379
 Kruse, Phil, 175, 176, 177, 181, 182, 183, 185, 188,
 189, 191, 192, 207, 222

Ku Klux Klan, 273
 Kuwait, 344, 348, 367
 Kwang-ju, 194, 195, 196, 209
 Kylie, D.J. "Deech", 170, 171, 172

L

Lake Robertshaw, 73
 Lakehurst, New Jersey, 54
 Lamar, Robert, 64, 66
 Lanai, 237, 238, 242
 Langston, Ed, 237, 238, 239, 249
 Laos, 75, 98, 132, 133, 138, 139, 144, 145, 146, 150
 Larkin, Robert, 208, 209
 Las Vegas, Nevada, 176, 278
 Lasseeter, Lee T. "Bear", 68, 70, 84, 386
 LCAC
 landing craft air cushion, 391
 Lee, Harry, 68, 69, 129, 140, 141
 Lejeune, John, 19
 Lemoore Naval Air Station, 106
Lexington, 42
 Libutti, Frank, 380
 Lima Company, 19
 Lindour, Jerry, 114
 Linebacker, 108, 133, 137, 138, 141, 150, 154
 LINKS
 lifestyle insights, networking, knowledge, skills,
 384
 Livingston, James, 218
 Lockheed-Martin, 395
 London, England, 266
 LSO, 43, 123
 Luck, Gary, 367
 Lynch, Bertie D., 325
 Lynn, Loretta, 29
 LZ
 landing zone, 25

M

M-15, 55, 80
 M-21 gear, 80
 MABS
 Marine Air Base Squadron, 233, 248
 MAC
 Military Airlift Command, 377
 MacDill Air Force Base, 124
 MacDonald, Steven, 3, 110, 225, 226
 Macke, Richard C., 324
 MACS
 Marine Air Control Squadron, 233, 242
 Maddocks, Robert "Mad Dog", 118, 123, 141, 142,
 176, 193, 196, 215, 289, 298, 300, 306
 MAF
 Marine amphibious force, 67, 70
 MAG
 Marine Air Group, 54, 57, 137, 159, 168, 215, 226,
 233, 235, 237, 241, 248, 260, 289, 299, 313,
 340, 388, 389
 MAG-11 Club, 97
 MAG-13, 69, 72, 73

MAG-15, 67
 MAG-24, 54, 168, 226, 233, 235, 237, 241, 248, 340, 388, 389
 MAG-31, 215
 MAGTF, 21, 173, 194, 242
 Mainside, 34
 Makalapa, 316
 Malaysia, 13, 14, 371
 Maloney, William, 202, 203, 204, 212, 221, 222
 MALS
 Marine aviation and logistics squadron, 215
 man the pad, 74
 MarCad
 Marine cadet, 40, 49, 50, 109, 303
 Mardi Gras, 243
 MarForLant
 Marine Forces Atlantic, 315, 363
 MarForPac
 Marine Forces Pacific, 142, 188, 263, 289, 309, 314, 315, 319, 323, 325, 326, 328, 340, 343, 344, 346, 349, 350, 354, 359, 363, 365, 366, 367, 370, 372, 380, 381, 382, 384, 385, 398, 400
 Marine aviation, 40, 55, 69, 100, 111, 119, 151, 162, 166, 171, 172, 173, 215, 223, 225, 231, 251, 261, 265, 283, 286, 293, 299
 Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, 170
 Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, 114
 Marine Corps Museum, 114
 Marine Corps' Birthday, 122
 Marine Forces Pacific, 318, 326, 340, 341, 352, 354, 372, 386, 387, 398
 Marine ground, 173, 218
 Marine Night, 244
 Marine of the Month, 143
 Marine War Fighting Center, 355
 Mark-4
 gun-pod, 62
 Mark-76, 62, 88
 MarLog
 Marine logistics flight, 129
 Mars Rover, 358
 Marsh, Richard C., 77, 78, 84, 85, 86, 90
 Marshall, Ray, 109, 110
 Martin Baker, 92
 Mary Hardin Baylor Women's College, 3
 Massman, Ed, 20
 MATSG
 Marine Air Training Support Group, 31, 216
 Maui, Hawaii, 237, 242
 MAWTS
 Marine aviation weapons and tactics squadron, 69, 158, 159, 167, 193, 310, 311, 312
 MAWTULant
 Marine Air Weapons Training Unit Atlantic, 158, 311
 MAWTUPac
 Marine Air Weapons Training Unit Pacific, 158, 311
 MCAA
 Marine Corps Aviation Association, 92, 170
 McAffrey, Barry, 338
 MCAS Futenma, 352
 McBride, William, 60
 McCain, John, 38, 39, 328
 MCCDC
 Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 258
 McCorckle, Fred, 230, 290, 303
 MCCRES
 Marine Corps Combat Readiness Evaluation System, 180
 MCCRTG-10
 Marine Combat Crew Readiness Training Group, 122
 McCutcheon, Gary "Clutch", 197, 198, 199, 200
 McDonald, David, 224
 McFall, William, 86
 McFerren, Kent, 129, 130, 137
 McGann, Richard "Rattler", 120
 McGeary, Fred, 76
 MCRD
 Marine Corps Recruit Depot, 13
 Mead, James, 329
 Mead, Sidney "Spit", 215
 MEB
 Marine Expeditionary Brigade, 289, 360, 369
 MedEvac
 Medical Evacuation, 102, 137
 MEF
 Marine Expeditionary Force, 19, 67, 173, 194, 255, 293, 294, 296, 297, 301, 306, 309, 314, 322, 332, 338, 344, 347, 348, 355, 356, 366, 369, 370, 371, 378, 380, 381, 398
 Meglareese, Ed, 101
 MER
 multiple ejection rack, 150
 Mercury, 400
 Meridian, Mississippi, 38, 39, 41, 47, 50, 329, 337
 MEU
 Marine Expeditionary Unit, 250, 309, 366, 388
 Meyers, Don, 12
 Midway, 180, 190, 392
 MiG, 108, 138, 139, 140, 154
 MiG-21, 154
 Miles, John, 118
 milkrun, 102, 103
 Mitchell School, 4
 Mk-76, 47
 Molokai, 242
 Monroe, J.P. "Monk", 230
 Moore, Darrell, 249
 Moore, Mark, 162, 165, 168, 169, 174
 Moore, Thomas R., 117, 118, 119, 120, 122, 123, 125
 MoPac, 113
 Morehead City, 56, 60
 Morest strips, 80
 Morgan, Thomas, 231
 MOS
 military occupational specialty, 64
 Mott, Michael, 311, 394, 395
 Mount Fuji, 19, 21, 26, 27, 29
 MPF, 276, 369, 370, 371, 372
 MPS
 maritime pre-positioned shipping, 276, 369, 377

MSSG
 Marine service support group, 372
 Mundy, Carle E., 251, 252, 254, 275, 283, 284, 285,
 286, 287, 313, 314, 315, 321, 325, 341
 Musial, Stan, 6
 mustang
 officer who was previously enlisted, 56
 MWSG
 Marine wing support groups, 334
 Myers, Richard, 353

N

Naha Air Force Base, 68
 Nam Phong, Thailand, 34, 131, 133, 136, 138, 144,
 149, 150, 151, 156, 158, 161, 168, 175, 392, 398
 napalm "napes", 62, 75, 89, 97, 149, 150, 159
 NASA
 National Aeronautics and Space Administration,
 106, 358, 359, 394, 395, 397, 399, 400, 402, 403
 Native Fury, 369
 NATO, 265, 267, 269, 270, 271, 272, 274, 275, 299
 NATOPS, 63, 320, 330
 Naval War College, 181, 217
 NavCad
 naval cadets, 49
 Navy Aviation Systems Command, 224
 Navy Department, 223
 Navy Flight Physiology and Naval Aviation Medicine,
 33
 Navy League of the United States, 211, 212
 Navy Safety Center, 179
 Navy Systems Command, 224
 NavyCom
 Navy Commendation Medal, 95
 NCO
 non-commissioned officer, 16, 18, 23, 120, 134,
 182, 183, 184, 185, 334
 Neal, Richard "Butch", 68, 152, 178, 297, 298, 315
 Negron, William, 13, 20
 Nellis Air Force Base, 278
 New Braunfels settlement, 3
 NFO
 Naval Flight Officer, 76, 301
 Nichols, Monty, 106
Night Before Christmas, 369
 Night tanking, 77
 Nightmare Range, 195
 NIS
 naval investigative services, 136
 NORDO
 no radio situation, 84
 North Korea, 345, 348
 North Korean Army, 345
 Northern Training Area, Okinawa, 19
 Norway, 12, 265, 266, 269, 270, 271, 276, 277, 314,
 325, 370
 Norway Northern Command, 266
 Norwegian Army, 274
 Norwegian Navy, 275
 nuggets, 67, 103, 117, 155
 first tour aviators, 54

NVA
 North Vietnamese Army, 98
 Nyland, William L. "Spider", 118, 176, 197, 200, 201,
 207, 211, 215, 216, 236, 242, 248, 266, 278, 285,
 289, 300, 301, 302, 332, 338, 393

O

O'Bannon Hall, 13
 O'Keefe, Sean, 397, 398, 403
 O'Mara, Kevin, 68
 OCS
 Officer Candidate School, 15, 16, 20
 Officer's Choral Group, 99
 Officer's Club, 47, 71, 97, 100, 152, 202, 272, 374, 375
 Officers Country, 73
Official History of the Vietnam War, 131
 Okinawa, Japan, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 25, 47, 67, 68, 69,
 187, 195, 196, 202, 212, 255, 322, 324, 351, 352,
 355, 357, 370, 378
 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 336, 337
 Old Sheep Shit Mountain, 18
 Olongapo, 47, 187
 Olsen, Michael, 289
 Oman, UAE
 United Arab Emirates, 360
 OODA
 observe, orient, decide, act, 356
 OP-05
 Air Warfare, 225, 226, 279, 281, 282
 OP-501, 224
 OP-50M, 225, 254, 259
 Operation Internal Look, 343, 348
 Operation Tandem Thrust, 363
 Ord, Robert L., 354, 373
 ORI
 operational readiness inspection, 55
 Orr, William, 20, 22, 25
 Osborne, Marilyn, 326
 Oslo, Norway, 265, 267, 275
 OSO
 Marine Officer Selection Officer, 8

P

Pace, Peter, 142, 156, 266
 Page 12s, 17
 Pakse, 144
 Pali Highway, 242
 Palmer, Patrick, 268
 Panama Canal, 17
 PAO
 Public Affairs Officer, 266
 Parker, Ralph E. "Chip", 343, 344, 348
 Parris Island, South Carolina, 16
 Patrick, Neal, 68, 178
 Paydo, Michael, 35, 36, 47
 PCS
 permanent change of station orders, 67, 70, 127, 382
 Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, 243, 244, 245, 316, 317, 354,
 375
 Peay, Binney, 346, 366

Pendergraft, Ray, 76
 Pensacola, Florida, 25, 30, 31, 32, 38, 40, 41, 56, 60,
 170, 216, 237, 302, 329, 330, 331
 Pentagon, 201, 225, 254, 255, 262, 266, 279
 Persian Gulf, 270, 286, 290, 291, 308, 360, 362, 363,
 368, 369
 Persons, Henry, 268
 Philippines, 14, 19, 25, 143, 149, 204, 205, 343, 364,
 380
 Phoenix missile, 121
 Phu Bai, 82, 102
 PIO
 pilot induced oscillations, 59
 Pioneer, 357
 Pitman, Charles, 254, 255, 260, 261, 303
 Plain de Jars, 133, 138, 144, 146, 150
 PLC
 platoon leaders class, 8, 9, 11, 12, 16, 20, 35, 392
 PLC Law, 8
 Pless, Steve, 302, 303
 Pohakuloa Training Area, 237, 388
 Point Magu, 121
 Poley, Bruce, 142
 Poole, William, 93
 POW
 prisoner of war, 328
 PP&O
 Plans, Programs and Operations, 251
 PRC-10, 28
 PRC-6, 28
 Price, Don, 12, 20, 28, 29
Princeton, 21
 Principles of Leadership, 220
 Prueher, Joseph, 311, 312, 323, 324, 351, 352, 372,
 373, 374, 375
 PTA
 Pohakuloa training area, 180
Pueblo, 85
 Puller House, 318
 Puller, Lewis, B. "Chesty", 317, 318
 Pyle, "Ernie", 59
 Pyramid Rock, 374, 375

Q

Quang Tri, 82, 100
 Quantico (Marine Corps Base), 16, 92, 169, 329, 355
 Quantico Leadership, 51
 Quilter, Charlie, 63

R

R & P
 Requirements and Programs, 231
 R&R
 rest & recuperation, 136
 RAG
 replacement air group, 54, 106, 117, 175
 Rainbow Village, 191
 Ransom, Al "Handsome", 48
 Raven-44, 144, 146

RDO
 runway duty officer, 48
 Reagan, Ronald, 229
 Red Cross, 97
 Red Flag, 178
 Red River Rats, 108
 Redman, Don, 61
 Reitsch, Manfred, 177
 Republic of China, 373
 RHWR
 radar homing and warning receiver, 147
 Richwine, David, 289
 Rietsch, Manfred, 176, 177, 182, 192, 193, 205, 206,
 210
 RIO
 radar intercept officer, 61, 68, 69, 76, 77, 78, 80, 82
 93, 95, 117, 118, 132, 140, 141, 147, 154, 160,
 195, 196, 263, 301, 302
 Roath, Phil, 40, 50
 Robertson tract of land, 3
 Rockhampton, Australia, 364
 ROK
 Republic of Korea, 94, 346
 Rolls-Royce, 229
 Roosevelt Roads, 61, 332
 Rose Garden, 130, 143
 ROTC
 Reserve Officer Training, 7, 8, 110, 111, 115, 232,
 385
 Rowe, Peter, 12, 267, 269
 Royal Australian Air Force
 RAAF, 364
 Royal Thai Base, 136
 Rudy, Al, 19
 Russell, Eugene, 222
 Russillio, Vic "The Hostile Wop", 78
 Ryan 'Firebee', 61

S

S-1
 administration officer, 63, 109, 128
 S-3
 operations, 57, 63, 65
 SA-2, 146
 SA-3, 146
 SA-4, 146
 SA-7, 132
 SAC
 Strategic Air Command, 139
 SAIC
 Science Applications International Corporation, 51,
 170, 396, 400
 Salado, Texas, 3
 SAM
 surface-to-air-missile, 62, 132, 139, 146, 147
 Samora, Walter, 93, 95
 San Francisco, California, 176
 San Marcos, Texas, 3
 Santa Claus, 369
 Saravane, 145
 Sasebo, 23

SAT strips, 80
 SATS
 short airfield for tactical support, 55, 124, 131, 335, 337
 Saudi Arabia, 350, 360, 362, 366
 Saufley Field, 34, 35, 36, 40, 41, 49, 302
 Schlaich, Norman "Dutch", 205, 206, 336
 Schmidle, Robert "Rooster", 289, 306, 308
 Schoendienst, Red, 6
 Schofield range, 387
 Schultz, R.F. "Dutch", 225
 Schultz, Robert "Rick-a-shay Rabbit", 62, 63
 Schwartz, Don, 233, 234, 237, 240, 248
 Schwarzkopf, Norman, 316
 Seabees, 131, 133
 Seavers, Roy, 64
 Second World War, 7, 20, 21, 269, 273, 354, 373
 Secretary of Defense, 172, 259
 Secretary of the Navy, 202, 279, 323, 394
 Seoul, 345, 346
 Shalikashvili, John, 326
 SHAPE
 Supreme Headquarters Allied Forces Europe, 270
 Shaw Air Force Base, 58
 Sheehan, Jack, 278
 Shohorn, 147
 Shufly Operation, 20
 Sidewinder missile, 320
 Sing Ha, 135
 SLF
 Special Landing Force, 21
 Smith, Keith A., 247, 251, 253, 254, 312, 383
 Smith, Phyllis, 312, 313
 snake
 snake-eye-retarded bomb, 62
 solo check, 37
 solo hop, 37, 44
 Somalia, 309, 341
 South Korea, 345
 Southeast Asia huts, 134, 151
 Southeast Asia Party, 124, 125
 Southeast Asian hooches, 73
 Sparrow
 AIM-7, air-to-air missile, 61, 121, 133, 137, 138
 Spearman, David, 76
 Spiker, Burt, 16
 Spooks, 139
 squirrel cage, 41, 331
 St. Louis Cardinal, 6
 Staack, Larry "Smoke", 195, 248
 Stackpole, Harry, 314, 315, 317, 319, 327
 Steel Tiger, 144
 Steele, Orlo K., 232, 233, 242, 244, 250, 340
 Stennis Space Center, 397
 Stortz, Michael, 142
 Strike U
 Naval Strike Warfare Training Center, 311
 Subic Bay Naval Base, 22, 87, 88, 364
 Sullivan, Michael "Lancer", 108, 180, 293
 Super-Constellations
 EC-121, 139
 Sydney, Australia, 364

Syria, 350

T

T&T
 training and test regiment, 16
 T/O
 Table of Operations, 17
 T-2, 38, 57, 58, 330
 T-28, 35
 T-2A, 38, 56, 329
 T-33, 111, 112, 164
 T-34, 35
 T-38, 197
 TA-4, 106
 TA-4F, 106
 TAC
 Tactical Air Command, 139, 264, 307
 TacAir
 Marine tactical aviation, 173, 227, 231, 283, 347, 348, 350, 359, 366, 371, 389
 TACAN
 tactical air navigation, 58, 82, 89, 102, 131, 199
 TACC
 Tactical Air Command Center, 119, 264
 Taft, Texas, 3
 TAI
 tactical air integration, 291
 Tailhook, 278, 280, 281, 282, 299, 327
 Taiwan, 19, 21, 23, 46, 376, 377
 Taiwan Navy, 377
 Taj Mahal, 71, 354
 Tally-Ho's, 98
 Tampa, Florida, 346
 TAOC
 tactical air operations center, 77, 102
 TBS
 The Basic School, 15
 teeny-weenies. See F-9, See F-9, See F-9, See F-9
 TER
 triple ejection rack, 150
 Tet, 73, 83, 85, 98
 Texas A&I, 107
 Texas A&M University, 385
 Texas Health Department, 6
 TF-9
 Cougar, 43, 44
 Thailand, 79, 130, 131, 136, 139, 155
 The 212 Mafia, 216
 The Blackhawks, 99
 The Navy Training Command, 105
 The Sumo Room, 190
 The War Between the States, 1, 2
Theodore Roosevelt, 338, 339
 Thompson, Wayne, 19
 Tiger Lil, 125
 tiger teams, 234
 tin-benders, 154
 Tinker Talk: Attack Lampoon, 124
 Togo 88, 94

Top Gun
 U.S. Navy Fighter Weapons School, 158, 159, 177, 193, 197
 Topley, Frank, 64
 TPQ-10, 78, 79, 100, 102, 103, 150
 TPQ-59, 178
 Traber, Daniel, 288
 Trail in Laos, 144
 TransPac, 296
 Trans-Pacific flight, 117, 149, 180, 187, 214, 227, 364, 392
 triple-A
 anti-aircraft artillery, 129, 132, 145, 150, 264
 Trundy, Richard T., 246
 Tucker, Robert, 180, 181
 Tullos, George "Cajun", 118, 123, 176, 193, 194, 195, 197, 208, 209, 214, 215, 248, 278
 Turkey, 270, 350
 Turner, Russ, 396
 Turner, Stansfield, 106, 107
 Twentynine Palms, 24, 106, 310, 336, 337
 Tyndall Air Force Base, 347
 Tyson, "Doc", 123

U

U.S. Air Force, 7, 8, 9, 58, 68, 71, 83, 84, 96, 97, 98, 99, 108, 111, 112, 119, 124, 127, 128, 131, 133, 134, 138, 139, 140, 144, 146, 149, 150, 151, 164, 205, 217, 218, 219, 242, 259, 261, 266, 268, 269, 293, 294, 307, 311, 330, 336, 347, 348, 350, 351, 353, 354, 363, 364, 366, 372, 375, 377, 378, 403
 U.S. Army, 3, 7, 17, 23, 157, 173, 188, 261, 266, 275, 339, 347, 348, 350, 351, 354, 363, 364, 366, 367, 369, 370, 372, 373, 375, 383, 384, 387, 388
 U.S. Forces Japan, 353
 U.S. Forces Korea
 USFK, 367
 U.S. Naval Academy, 323
 U.S. Navy, 26, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 39, 44, 68, 72, 88, 95, 104, 105, 106, 108, 112, 121, 133, 146, 163, 165, 166, 179, 186, 189, 211, 223, 224, 225, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 242, 243, 244, 255, 259, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 268, 270, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 300, 311, 316, 317, 322, 325, 329, 339, 354, 355, 359, 363, 366, 371, 372, 374, 375, 377, 378, 379, 384, 394, 397
 U-2, 106
 UA
 unauthorized absence, 187
 UAE
 United Arab Emirates, 362
 UAV
 unmanned aerial vehicle, 357, 358
 Ubon Air Base, 79
 Udorn, 136, 139, 152
 UDP
 unit deployment program, 176, 233, 284, 289, 290, 291, 320, 380, 383
 UHF
 ultra high frequency radio, 99
 Ulchi Focus Lens, 343, 368, 381

Underwood, Dave "Deputy Dog", 155
 United States Naval Academy, 11, 12, 126, 149, 161, 162, 163, 165, 166, 167, 168, 171, 173, 329, 330, 331, 332
 University of Alabama, 57
 University of Richmond, 174, 255
 University of Texas, 4, 6, 8, 9, 51, 109, 110, 114, 117, 220, 232, 386, 399
 University of Virginia, 86
 Upshur, 16
 USACom
 United States Atlantic Command, 338
 USMC History Division, 63

V

V-22
 Osprey, 259, 260, 261, 263, 279, 391
 Van Riper, Paul, 298
 Vangysel, Gary, 118, 120, 125
 VC
 Viet Cong, 94, 95, 290
 Vermilyea, Clyde L. "Jake", 170
 Victoria College, 6
 Victoria, Texas, 3, 4, 10, 53, 60
 Vietnam, 14, 19, 20, 45, 49, 57, 61, 62, 64, 66, 67, 68, 84, 87, 89, 92, 95, 102, 104, 108, 117, 118, 119, 125, 126, 127, 129, 131, 132, 138, 139, 141, 142, 144, 149, 150, 155, 157, 158, 159, 161, 177, 259, 290, 302, 340, 382
 Vladivostok, 372, 373
 VMA(AW)-242, 190
 VMA-201, 117
 VMA-223, 46
 VMFA-112, 141, 320
 VMFA-115, 34, 69, 78, 127, 129, 133, 134, 137, 141, 143, 152, 153, 155, 156, 175, 234, 237, 289, 392
 VMFA-212, 87, 90, 118, 167, 168, 175, 176, 186, 190, 207, 210, 214, 216, 217, 227, 241, 248, 296, 299, 364, 380
 VMFA-214, 90
 VMFA-232, 133, 134, 137, 151, 152, 154, 155, 176, 236
 VMFA-235, 176, 241, 248
 VMFA-251, 178, 289, 309
 VMFA-312, 289, 290, 339
 VMFA-314, 69, 70, 71
 VMFA-323
 Death Rattlers, 67, 68, 72, 84, 141
 VMFA-451, 178
 VMFA-513, 54
 VMFA-531, 54, 58, 61, 62, 127
 VMFA-542, 45, 69, 72, 74, 80, 84, 90, 92, 99, 100, 117, 129, 160, 220
 VMFAT-101, 113, 117, 119, 122, 123, 141, 158, 175, 214
 VT-21, 48, 49, 106, 123
 VT-26, 44, 47, 48, 53
 VT-4
 Jet Training Squadron Four, 38, 329, 330
 VT-7
 Jet Training Squadron Seven, 39

W

Wake Island Avengers, 45, 46
Washington, D.C., 113, 212, 221, 222, 223, 251, 254,
255, 315, 326, 394
WAVES, 191
Wayne, John, 16
Went, Joe, 256, 287
WestPac, 18, 20, 21, 45, 64, 126, 127, 128, 141, 176,
180, 181, 194, 204, 211, 221, 226, 250, 283, 289,
340, 344, 348, 354, 356, 380, 387, 393
Wey, Al, 342
White House, 403, 404
White, William, 223
Whiting Field, 35
Wiesbaden, Germany, 275
Wiggins, D, 55
Wild Weasels, 146
Wilkerson, Thomas, 286, 342
Wills, Duane, 226, 227, 249, 260, 262, 278, 279, 280,
281, 283, 300
Wilmington, North Carolina, 60
Wilson, Louis H., 228, 354
Wing headquarters, 97, 293
Wing Special Services Officer, 128
winging ceremony, 53
Wismer, Lance, 180, 196
women at the Naval Academy, 167

women in the Marines, 168
Woodson High School, 232
wooly-pully, 219
World War II, 31, 90, 100, 368
WTI
 weapons and tactics instructor, 196, 197, 310, 311

Y

Yankee Station, 133
Yellow Sheet, 170
yen roll, 189, 190
Yuma Daily Sun, 124
Yuma, Arizona, 62, 64, 65, 66, 113, 117, 119, 121,
122, 123, 124, 126, 175, 178, 179, 299

Z

Zimmerman, "Z-man", 248
Zinn, Don "Beaver", 176
Zinni, Anthony, 309, 344, 346, 366, 367
Zorro's Follies, 245
ZSU-23, 129, 132, 147
ZSU-23-4
 self-propelled, radar guided, anti-aircraft weapons
 system, 129
Zuni rocket, 75

